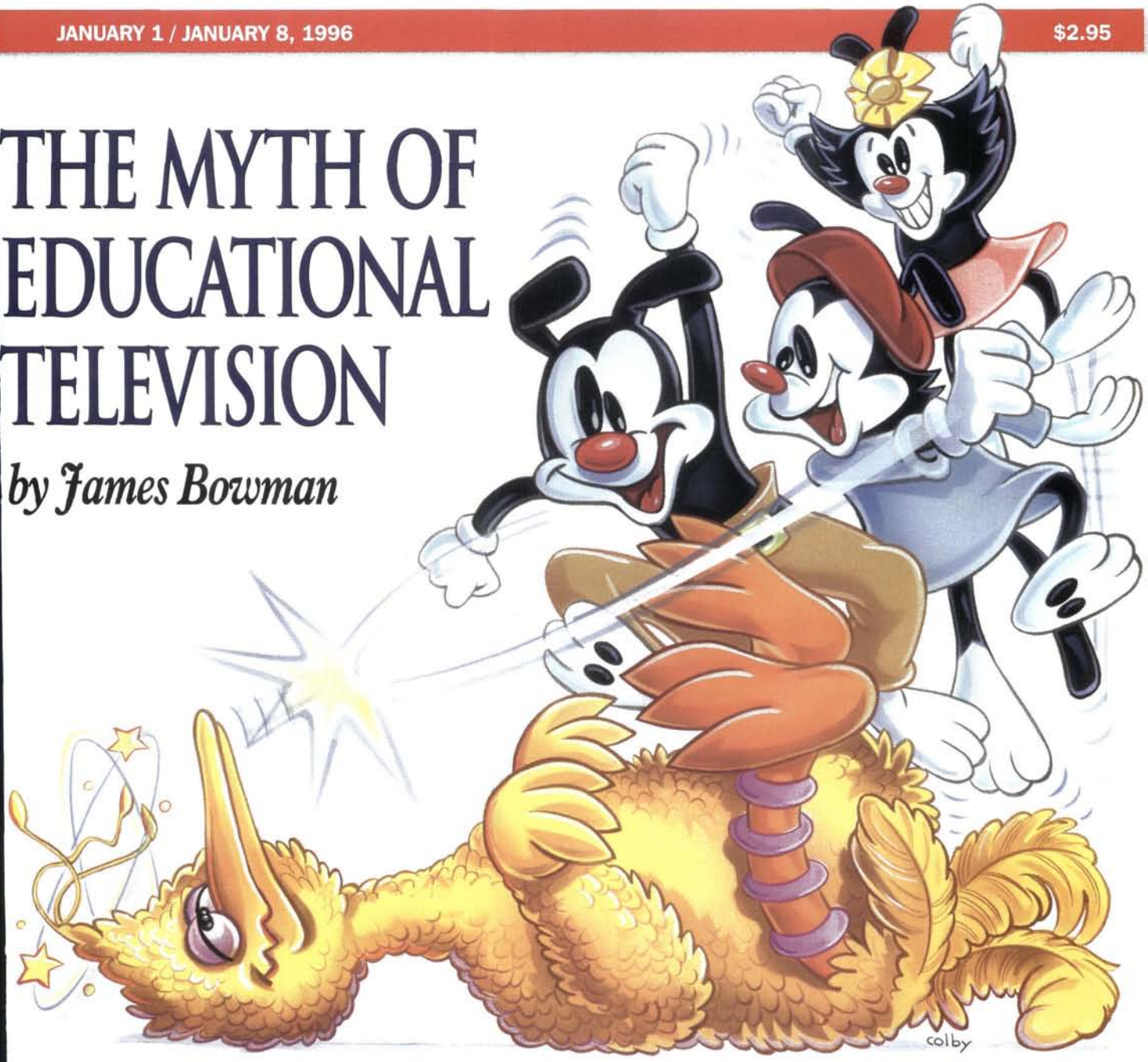
the weekly
# Standard

JANUARY 1 / JANUARY 8, 1996 $2.95

## THE MYTH OF EDUCATIONAL TELEVISION

*by James Bowman*

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*This is a combined issue. The next WEEKLY STANDARD will appear in the second week of January. Happy New Year.*

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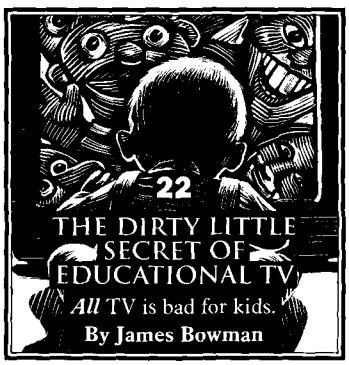


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# Rohatyn, Rohatyn, Rohatyn the Boat

Felix Rohatyn, the Democratic moneybags who managed the New York City financial bailout in the 1970s, is quietly angling to become chairman of the Federal Reserve Board. He'd replace Alan Greenspan, whose Fed term expires in March. Rohatyn isn't openly campaigning for the job. Perish the thought. He's merely expressing his availability in case Greenspan is too tired or intellectually spent to continue as chairman. Of course, that's exactly the way one campaigns for the Fed.

President Clinton would love to replace Greenspan, a Republican, with a Democrat if he thought financial markets and congressional Republicans would go along. They probably wouldn't.

Besides, Rohatyn's chances were diminished by the interest rate cut of a quarter percent engineered by Greenspan on December 19. This thrilled the Clinton White House, especially because Greenspan had suggested he might wait until the president forged a balanced budget deal with congressional Republicans before slashing. Now Greenspan's prospects for renomination are better, Rohatyn's worse. Rohatyn has another problem: He's never been a favorite of the Clintons. He was late in endorsing Clinton in 1992. And the Clintonites remember the time he spent advising Ross Perot that year.

## Those Darn Family Values

In the October 23 Scrapbook, we detailed an epidemic outbreak of familial fetishism. Departed Clintonites Mikva, Paster, Neel, Cutler, and Begala explained they had self-ejected not out of frustration or from being ignored but because they "wanted to spend more time with the family." Now we learn the malady is more pervasive than we dared imagine.

Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs Richard Holbrooke is leaving to spend more time with new wife, Kati Marton. And who can blame him? After all, she has described in print his "great, wonderful physicality, this very tactile big-bear quality."

And you thought the congressional exodus, especially on the Democratic side, was inspired by tough races, partisan bickering, the vitriolic electorate, private-sector cash incentives, or diminished power? Nonsense—they just want to toss the ball with Junior. The roll call of those leaving to nurture husbands, wives, children, and all manner of kin is truly astounding. There are Democratic Reps. Tom Bevill, Harry Johnston, Ronald Coleman, and Pete Geren, and Republican Reps. Jan Meyers, Barbara Vucanovich, and Jack Fields. In the Senate, we have Sam Nunn, Paul Simon, Nancy Kassebaum, and Bennett Johnston.

So family-centric is the current crop that aspiring politicians like former Little Rock mayor Tom Prince and Little Rock lawyer Nate Coulter, who'd been thinking of replacing outgoing Democratic Rep. Ray Thornton, have begged out to spend more time with their families even before having the chance to deprive them of family time.

## Amish Term Limits

The most unusual recent explanation for a congressional retirement is surely Bob Walker's. Walker, the 10-term Pennsylvania Republican, put it this way on Dec. 15: "Since the first Continental Congress 220 years ago, the Pennsylvania Dutch seat has established a proud tradition. Part of that tradition is that no one has served for more than 20 years. As someone who came to the office promising myself that I would not spend the rest of my working life in the Congress, this is the right time to move on and in the process help keep a little bit of history intact." Wow—Amish term limits!

## Injustice, Thy Name is Taubman

In a signed *New York Times* editorial titled "Mr. Angleton and Mr. Ames," Philip Taubman advised, with an air of world-weary wisdom, that the Central Intelligence Agency was brought low by twin destroyers: James J. Angleton and Aldrich Ames. Angleton was the 20-year counterintelligence chief of the CIA, unquestionably brilliant and fiercely anti-communist, but about whose effectiveness legitimate debate takes place; Ames is the traitor whose betrayal led to, among other things, the torture and murder of American agents. (Taubman writes that "America's real spies inside the Soviet Union were unmasked by Mr. Ames and they were replaced or manipulated by the KGB." "Replaced"!)

Taubman discerns "a cruelly ironic connection



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# Scrapbook

between the two men." "They were both obsessed with deception, and in the end deception devoured them both, and with them, the CIA." "[T]hey twisted the agency into knots that have yet to be completely untied." "Only two men could create such a maze." "[T]heir story is the story of the failure of the CIA. Mr. Angleton, the mole hunter, and Mr. Ames, the mole, burrowed so deep into the recesses of American intelligence that they reached a lightless place where one man's effort to protect secrets and another man's effort to destroy them seemed barely distinguishable because both gravely damaged the CIA."

This is, to put it mildly, an infamy. Whatever sins Angleton may have committed in life, he was a patriot whose belief in the existence of moles was posthumously vindicated by the discovery of Ames. Ames, by contrast, was responsible for the deaths of 10 people, at a minimum. To call this moral equivalence is not enough. Moral idiocy would be more appropriate.

## The Reading List

Yes, the Reading List has some 'splaining to do—for the third week in a row. In the correction of an error about the plot of Evelyn Waugh's *Black Mischief*, another was committed: The act of cannibalism alluded to does not occur on the book's final page. "Basil Seal did not ingest his fiancée at the cannibal banquet in the last paragraph of the novel, but in the penultimate chapter," writes William P. O'Neill of Washington, D.C., who is charitable enough to add that "the Reading List remains the best part of the magazine." Dennis Dort of Los Angeles has more fun with yet another boo-boo: "It has become weekly sport at our house: gathering around the fire to find the Reading List error. *Phineas Redux* is, of course, the fourth of the six Palliser novels. Do I get a T-shirt or something?" No. No T-shirt for you, wise guy.

So now the contest begins. Each week, there will be an error in the Reading List. Find it and you win . . . nothing except the mention of your name in the Reading List, affirming for all the nation to see your remarkable literacy.

As part of our act of contrition, we thought we would offer a list of memorable prose works about literary gaffes:

***The Devils***, by Dostoyevsky. Dostoyevsky was one of the funniest writers who ever lived, though you would not know it from his reputation. A hilarious section in the middle of the novel features a popinjay character thinly based on fellow Russian novelist Ivan Goncharov, who offers a public performance of his final work, called *Merci* because of his excessive Francophilia. The attack was a strange payback for Goncharov's generosity toward Dostoyevsky during a period of impoverishment a few years before.

***The Next Time***, by Henry James. A long short story about a writer who decides he needs to write a commercially viable work—and watches as it does worse than any other piece of writing he has ever done.

***The Locusts Have No King***, by Dawn Powell. Powell is the long-forgotten now-heralded American writer who specialized in satires of the New York literary scene. This book, her best, is a reworked version of Edith Wharton's *The Custom of the Country*, in which a soulless beauty marries upward and, unlike in Wharton, becomes a famous writer—even though she never writes her own stuff.

Good luck.



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# Casual

## In Praise of Martha Stewart

The week before Christmas, I was shopping for presents in a local bookstore when I heard, behind a bank of books, the rapid, rising whisper of an unmistakably angry woman. I guessed she had just been fired or dumped. It surprised me when I turned the corner and saw a college-age woman, beet-red, hissing at a girlfriend and gesticulating at *Martha Stewart's Handmade Christmas*. "I hate her," the woman was saying, "with her eggshell paint and her—I was so glad when they came out with that parody. Did you see that? Where she stencils her driveway? Ugh. Someone ought to do *Martha Stewart Dying*!"

Am I the only person in North America who likes Martha Stewart? Obviously not, since *Martha Stewart Living* magazine has 1.3 million subscribers, and her syndicated TV show 5 million viewers. But what is it about Martha Stewart that moves our cultural guardians (journalists, book-buyers, etc.) to such paroxysms of loathing? "*Martha Stewart Living* is a form of tyranny," writes Antonia Zerbisias of the *Toronto Star*. *People* lacerated Stewart in a cover profile last October. The *Washington Post*'s Megan Rosenfeld has defined the "Martha Stewart Moment" as "the time at which you have to be strapped down to keep from taking a shotgun and blasting the television set and her smug little smile to smithereens."

The rap on Stewart and other high priestesses of domesticity is that they secretly prey on class anxieties and snobbery. Yet Stewart is less a latter-day Emily Post than an upmarket Heloise; there is no etiquette pedantry—none—in any of her books or shows. Stewart doesn't really care about class, which infuriates our cultural commentators, because it's the thing they care about most. It is a measure of their confusion that they can never decide whether to tar her as an old-money snob or an *arriviste*.

No: What really bothers Stewart's detractors is that she cares about the home. "I really loved it," Stewart said of her move to Connecticut in 1974. "I loved the garden. I loved decorating, designing, cooking." In the wake of feminism's triumph, this is a subversive message. The staple of the Martha Stewart profile, then, has been to show that she can't mean it; or if she means it, that she doesn't know what she's talking about.

This accounts for a great deal of the ruthlessness: Writers set out to prove she's miserable. Last month, even the *National Enquirer* attacked her for her messy divorce. All Stewart profiles feature the writer's "surprise" at her occasional iciness and even ruthlessness, as if a love of the kitchen should make one docile as a dumpling. Speaking to Charlie Rose last September, she described her life as a stockbroker in the early seventies. "The movie *Wall Street* had nothing on this firm," she says, not without pride. Stewart freely admits she can be a bitch on wheels; to prove that is to prove nothing. In fact, the feminists Stewart by implication spurns are forgetting one of their only sensible insights: that just because homemaking is underappreciated doesn't make it easy or without anguish.

Stewart describes herself as "a balanced feminist"—an exquisite dig—but that doesn't mean that her life is one of round-the-clock glee. Homemaking, like the arts, has always valued work and beauty at least partly as a refuge from sadness. That's why every attack on Stewart for having an inner life more tortured than she lets on only makes me think the more highly of her.

Our generation has withdrawn its approval from the housewife's calling—which is why people make demands of Martha Stewart that they would never make of other artists. Why is it okay for Norman Mailer to stab his wife but not for Martha Stewart to hog the camera? We still read Rimbaud's poems even though he traded slaves, but we're supposed to despise Martha's stollen recipe, or her zabaglione, because she's Machiavellian in the boardroom?

The anti-Stewart mania, of course, is not about her but about her readers, whether homemakers or not. Stewart critics cast them as a herd of tractable bovines. ("Martha would have us slaving all day to make individual pumpkin soufflés in mini jack-o-lanterns," says Zerbisias.)

Readers of *Martha Stewart Living* don't respond to advice with such servility, any more than readers of *Anna Karenina* all jump under trains. At some level the "housewives" have decided that if the choice is between Martha and her critics, they'll choose the one who condescends to them less.

I, at least, was thinking along these lines when I quietly said, "Excuse me," and reached past the irate Martha-hater for my copy of *Martha Stewart's Handmade Christmas*. I took it to the counter and asked them to gift-wrap it.

**Christopher Caldwell**



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## "We Hereby Devolve . . ."

Clint Bolick's excellent critique of Alexandria, Virginia, ("Leviathan in the Suburbs," Dec. 18) fails to mention two key factors that make this city much different from most mid-sized cities. First, there are no local media. Second, most politically active individuals in Alexandria focus on national and international affairs in neighboring Washington, and not on what takes place here. In short, Alexandria is not a good case study of what's going on in many cities across the United States. The cities, in fact, may be doing more to advance conservative ideals than the states, many of which represent territories that have little to do with economic, social, and political realities.

MARK HELMKE
ALEXANDRIA, VA

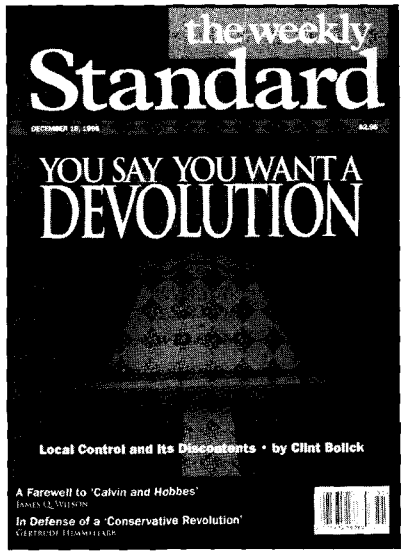
Though Clint Bolick properly indicts today's municipal government in action, chances are that the good folks in suburban "tight little islands" across the land just love the status quo. The local bureaucracies' meddling constricts housing supplies in the face of ongoing demand, and thus causes ongoing increases in the value of homes in the desirable suburbs. Thus, from the established homeowners' selfish point of view, particularly considering the tax benefit of home ownership, the more oppressive their local government, the better they like it.

GIDEON KANNER
LOS ANGELES, CA

Clint Bolick concludes his litany of complaints about Alexandria's government with the following admonition: "The point many conservatives miss in their zeal for devolution is that states and cities are just another form of big government." If it is true, as he says, that "[a] real devolution revolution will empower individuals and the communities they choose to organize, not local fiefdoms," then the solution to Mr. Bolick's complaints lies conveniently in his grasp. If Alexandria is run as terribly as Bolick suggests, he should support candidates or parties that will implement the changes so desperately needed. Perhaps Bolick might run for office and implement these changes himself. Only the people can make the government—their government—accountable.

MARK E. RUSH
LEXINGTON, VA

Clint Bolick confounds economic utilitarianism with conservatism. He convincingly argues that the regulatory state is economically maleficent and at times absurd. Yet conservatives have never based their belief in devolution (a modern euphemism for federalism) solely on economic efficiency. American conservatives, being constitutionalists, have always believed that America contains a variety of rooted local cultures worthy of esteem, which should be protected from the meddling of distant influences and powers, whether abroad or in Washington.




The conservative defense of local prerogatives has never rested on whether Alexandria or any other city within the Republic adopts the economic principles of Friedrich Hayek. The conservative appreciates that what is appropriate for Boston may not be appropriate for Boise. Each has distinct social values that it chooses to promote. If its inhabitants find local regulations abusive or counter-productive, their recourse is to local political processes, and should not be to Congress, nor to the courts.

However entrenched a local regime, it is still far more accessible than the halls of Congress and a more appropriate venue for such grievances.

So conservatives do not lie awake worrying about Leviathan in the suburbs. The Republic has little to fear from the policies of Jim Moran as mayor; but it has everything to fear from the centralizing designs of Jim Moran as congressman.

NATHANIEL T. TRELEASE
CHEYENNE, WY

## Districting by Race

Bull's-eye for The Weekly Standard with its piercing analysis of a shameful chapter from the Bush Justice Department: racial gerrymandering ("Moderates and Gerrymanders," Editorial, Dec. 18). All affirmative-action programs are insidious, but this one is especially so in that it promotes the re-segregation of racially integrated neighborhoods.

The proponents of these twisted, tortuous districts believe that states have an obligation to redress the tragic segregation of the past with a new "benign and helpful" segregation. This idea is dangerous. It is wrong to use the disease of segregation as the cure for segregation. It is a fundamental lesson of American and world history that whenever governments become involved in classifying citizens by race, they create more harm than good.

It is tragic that many leaders in the civil rights community believe that the only way to have minorities elected to Congress is to maintain these "separate but equal" policies. This kind of reasoning would permit the return of segregated drinking fountains so long as the same water flowed from each.

EDWARD BLUM
WASHINGTON, DC

## Against the Bork-ers

In her piece about my case ("The Vindication of Christina Jeffrey," Dec. 18), Elena Neuman hits the nail on the head. What matters most for the future of our nation is that we put an end to public lynching and the regime of the unanswerable canard. To the extent that my efforts have served to free seri-



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ous citizens from terror tactics—and have put libelers on notice that they cannot rob an individual of his good name—my own vindication may be a turning point.

Thanks to absurd court interpretations of what constitutes a public figure, anyone who accepts public appointment is vulnerable to the kind of smear campaign waged against me. One's name, earned by years of diligent and meritorious work, can be shattered in a day, and detractors can lie and cheat with impunity, as long as they can seek refuge in the nebulous defense of an "absence of malice." "Malice" is so difficult to prove that the effort for one of ordinary means is absolutely hopeless.

CHRISTINA F. JEFFREY
MARIETTA, GA

## Do You Speak Religious?

Scott M. Morris, in his "Cultural Disconnect" (Dec. 18), pinpoints one of the main issues dividing Americans in the culture wars: The media and academia are long on sophistry and sadly deficient in real meaning. This has cost publishers millions in failed books; it has cost TV shows even more in advertising; and it has cost Hollywood most of all. Religion begins in faith and the human heart. From it springs a whole range of spiritual qualities, seeking out values with a fervent determination. Religious Americans who search for meaning in the media will not find it there.

BEN WILLIS
ELIZABETH, NJ

Scott M. Morris has defined the problem beautifully, and until its import is assimilated by the body politic, divisiveness and disconnect will continue apace. The secular do not understand the religious, even though they are apparently speaking the same language. They are shouting past one another. How this problem can be solved, I do not know. Cultural Disconnect is the name of the disease, and now that we have defined the problem, perhaps we can begin to do something about it.

WILLIAM C. KNOTT
ENGLEWOOD, FL

## Stay Alive at 55

In his paean to higher speeds ("Spanking the Nanny State," Dec. 18), Tod Lindberg forgot to mention that, along with foiling Big Brother, raising the limits will generate more business—for ambulances, doctors, hospitals, lawyers, body shops, wheel-chair manufacturers, and morticians.

MORTON C. PAULSON
SILVER SPRING, MD

## Sinatra's Way's Okay

Andrew Ferguson's article on the "hoopla" surrounding Frank Sinatra's 80th birthday ("Sinatra at 80: Ring-a-Ding-Don't," Dec. 11) was a major disappointment. That Mr. Sinatra is a *superb* entertainer cannot be denied: hit records in every decade since the 30s; unmatched excellence as a "natural" singer; great success in radio, television, and the movies; a "passion for life." Sure, he has an ego that more than matches his enormous talents. He can be compulsive, moody, and arrogant; insensitive, critical, and cruel. But I have not the slightest doubt that the positive side of his contributions to the American way of life far exceed the negative aspects of his persona, which the media seem to love to dwell on.

DENNIS MURPHY
BURKE, VA

## Come Back, Little Calvin

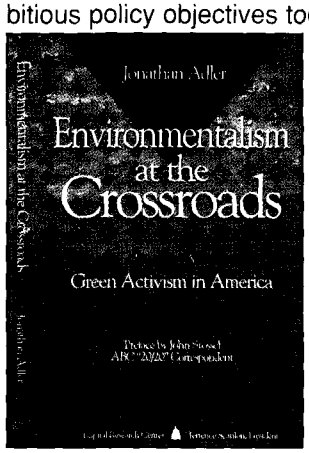
Concerning James Q. Wilson's appreciation of "Calvin and Hobbes" (Dec. 18): For many years, I have enjoyed this comic strip as my first love. I mourn its passing and earnestly hope that Bill Watterson will reconsider and continue.

I used to have a problem figuring out where Calvin fits in our social structure. The problem was solved in 1992. Events have proven that Calvin is actually a quintessential Republican revolutionary. Unfortunately, there is no Hobbes gently to suggest a better, less drastic way to balance the budget.

WALTER C. WARD
MIAMI, FL


What Price Environmentalism?

Environmental groups that once made consistent strides towards ambitious policy objectives today are often stymied. Americans realize environmental regulations cost them $150 billion a year and don't always deliver the promised risk reduction. ***Environmentalism at the Crossroads: Green Activism in America*** explores whether the nation's environmental establishment will overcome its recent failures or be forced onto a new course.

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the weekly Standard

# THE VANITY OF THIRD-PARTY POLITICS

Critics of an ideological, partisan American politics—especially those who would alter that politics by adding a third major party to the mix—generally complain as much about the *tone* of public discourse as about its substance. Washington has become a mean, soul-destroying place, they say. So mean, in fact, that good folks interested in common-sense solutions to basic problems no longer want to work there. And the media—delighting in their game of "gotcha," eager to "twist" meaning in the service of a "food fight"—are greatly to blame for this sorry state of affairs. That's what Ross Perot tells us, anyway. From his regular perch on *Larry King Live*.

It's undeniable that political journalism is easily distracted by conflict, the nastier the better. And daily reporting can be inaccurate, malicious, or distorted through "spin," a process that sometimes leaves appalling incompetence unpunished and worthy careers destroyed. Why, then, do politicians submit to the harsh rigors of publicity? Because it is "part of the job." But also, truth be told, because media attention offers a tremendous psychological reward. It *feels* good. And for a certain kind of public figure, it may feel *too* good.

Awash in the pleasure of celebrity, he forgets the distinction between his personal press clippings and the public cause they are meant to help advance. He confuses the national interest with the interests of his own ego. He becomes a media junkie. Particularly susceptible to this addiction are marginal and retired politicians, and nitwitted, unelectable demagogues, whose claim to represent a serious, popular platform is tenuous to begin with.

Which brings us right back to Ross Perot and the other people now advocating a third American political party. The idea is vanity. Nothing more.

Consider the latest, most comical outbreak of third-party fever. In private discussions beginning in October, a small group of "prominent" Democrats and independents, all but one of them already or soon to be out of office, agrees that a coherent and increasingly desperate "majority constituency" exists in America for . . . well, for *them*. The conversations are "secret"; only PBS, CBS, NBC, *Time*, and the *New York Times* are kept informed. But Paul Tsongas, the most aggressive of the conspirators, lets us in on the One True Platform. The "huge" mass of our citizens wants something neither existing major party provides: balanced-budget fiscal conservatism blended with activist, social-issues liberalism. And if Democrats and Republicans do not "respect" this "passionate center," a third-party movement will and should arise.

It was supposed to arise at a press conference on Dec. 18, when Tsongas & Co. nailed 11 theses on the indulgences of the two-party system to the door of the Minneapolis Hilton. But the plan flew apart. Retiring Senator Bill Bradley and Maine's independent governor, Angus King, broke with the group and refused to sign its manifesto. Gary Hart didn't show up. Tsongas and former Colorado governor Richard Lamm publicly rejected the third-party presidential aspirations of their erstwhile colleague Lowell Weicker. The three men spat at each other in wire service reports.

"I had hoped against hope that the power of the idea would pull us through," Tsongas sighed. No such luck; the idea has no such power; it is hardly an idea at all.

There is no significant market among the many millions of Republican voters for a "progressive" social agenda of new rights and new regulations, as Arlen Specter's abortive presidential campaign proved this year. And most Democratic voters are not prepared to buy economic austerity; if they were, Paul Tsongas would be president. Tsongas admires the "balanced-budget liberalism" he sees in the mirror, and imagines his press coverage reflects an "astonishing reaction" of approval at the nation's grass roots. Nope. What great gobs of money activist liberalism spendeth, a balanced budget taketh away. Asked to pick, as they have been this year, most Americans will



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be for one or the other agenda. And they'll be smart enough to understand they have no serious third choice.

Paul Tsongas's third-party dreams are an aristocratic vanity; he flatters himself that no existing partisan coalition could ever satisfy so fine and delicate a sensibility as his. Ross Perot is neither fine nor delicate. His vanity is *lumpen*. He, too, wants a balanced budget. But we have a Republican party for that. Perot's agenda is otherwise pure bile and resentment. "They," Republican and Democratic partisans, are in. He and his people, nonpartisan "patriots," are out. And he is willing to spend his millions on a third party presidential campaign intended to switch those places around.

This scheme can't work, either. Perot can't be president himself. Nor can he nominate anyone else with a realistic chance of victory; no such person will go near him. So Perot's nascent party is reduced to a spoiler's role in 1996—as third parties almost always are in a nonparliamentary system of winner-take-all elections. Democrats will probably benefit from Perotism next year, as they did in 1992. But will that result make most voters genuinely happy? And will it be good for the public discourse Perot claims he wants to cleanse?

A new Field poll in California has 76 percent of respondents saying that voting for a third party "is like throwing away your vote." And on Dec. 19 in Ohio, one of Perot's stronger states in 1992, his Reform party failed to qualify for the March 1996 primary ballot. Too few registered voters signed the requisite petitions—which embarrassment the Texan's headquarters staff, always quick with an excuse, used as evidence that the system is rigged to prevent competition against the Republicrat duopoly.

Oh, yeah? Meet Dr. John Hagelin, 41-year-old Pittsburgh physicist and presidential candidate. He's for a flat tax. And for transcendental meditation, though he denies his campaign has any "formal" ties to his close friend, the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. Hagelin's Natural Law party *will* be on the Ohio primary ballot next March, having qualified easily.

American politics raises no significant technical bar against the existence of third parties. There are tons of them. It's just that none has proved actually necessary for 135 years. And a third party has rarely been *less* necessary than in 1996.

It may once have been true, as the famous 1968 quip by third-party candidate George C. Wallace had it, that there was not a "dime's worth of difference" between the Democratic and Republican parties. But it was not true in last year's congressional elections. It is not true now, as the two parties wage a slow and painful battle over a budget that would fundamentally recharacterize the relationship of federal power to private life. And it will not be true next year, in that battle's aftermath.

Our two major parties are now organized around two firmly opposed and (by American standards) reasonably coherent views of proper governance and social order. "Consensus" cannot be achieved in such a dispute, either by wishing it into existence (Paul Tsongas) or by quashing the dispute in a demagogic appeal to "patriotism" (you know who). One side must eventually win. Assertions to the contrary are vanity. And they serve only the vain.

So may the third-party monster continue to suffer humiliations. And may we all have a happy partisan New Year.

*— David Tell, for the Editors*

# How Jeffords Obstructs

**by Matthew Rees**

Jim Jeffords of Vermont holds the dubious distinction of being the most liberal Republican in a Senate increasingly populated by conservatives. In recent weeks, Jeffords has emerged as the chief Republican obstacle to enacting the party's legislative agenda. In the process, he has acquired something of a bunker mentality, which he uncharacteristically displayed for House and Senate Republicans at a meeting in the Capitol office of Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole on December 16.

The meeting was called because of Jeffords's fervent opposition to a $3.6 million provision—in the $5 billion District of Columbia appropriations bill—funding scholarships for District students to attend suburban public schools or District private schools. During the 45-minute session, House Speaker Newt Gingrich spelled out why the scholarships were a key to broader education reform for D.C. and then presented Jeffords with several compromises, such as limiting the program to elementary students or reducing the number of participants. (Dole mostly nudged Jeffords to agree with whatever Gingrich proposed.) Jeffords refused every offer, citing opposition from education unions, and demanded a separate Senate vote on the scholarships. But Gingrich feared a filibuster. He insisted the



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options were either to include the scholarships in the D.C. appropriations conference bill or to strip the bill of all its education language. When Jeffords opted for the latter, a red-faced Gingrich exploded, saying he couldn't believe Jeffords would prevent low-income students from escaping the D.C. schools. With that, the stormy meeting ended, and scholarships were put on the back burner.

That Jeffords disagrees with most congressional Republicans on an array of issues is no surprise. Americans for Democratic Action, a left-wing interest group, rates him only slightly to the right of Ted Kennedy and on an equal footing with Carol Moseley-Braun, two Senate liberals. What surprises Jeffords's colleagues is his obstinacy. It wasn't a problem when Republicans were in the minority. Now that they hold the majority, however, their frustration with Jeffords is acute. Some staffers say only half-jokingly that when Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell of Colorado switched parties earlier this year to become a Republican, he should have been swapped for Jeffords.

Better yet, Jeffords should simply get out of the reformers' way. On welfare, for example, he and Richard Lugar, a GOP senator from Indiana, refused to sign the conference report because it would devolve responsibility for school lunches to the states. Before the scholarship scrum, welfare conferees had been led to believe Jeffords would agree to the Republican plan with modest compromises. Jeffords denied this, but on December 20 he signed the conference report, after receiving an extra $6 billion for child care and nutrition.

Chas Fagan

**Jim Jeffords**

Another problem has been education, where there is a Republican consensus for deregulating public schools. But Jeffords, whose mother was a high school music teacher, wants to improve public schools through higher spending and regards asking them to compete with non-public schools as off limits. In 1994 he led an effort with Senator Chris Dodd, Democrat of Connecticut, to increase federal spending on education from 2 percent of the budget to 10 percent. These positions won him the endorsement of the National Education Association in his reelection fight last year (one of only three congressional Republicans to receive such a blessing). But once the Republicans won control of Congress, he took stock of the new climate and dropped his plan for increased funding. Since then he has been traveling the country visiting schools in poor areas. In April he got the Business Roundtable to sponsor an education summit that he co-chaired with Richard Riley and Terrel Bell, education secretaries under Clinton and Reagan. He also spends an hour a week reading to children at the Robert E. Brent Elementary School in Washington, and in September he spoke at an NEA "bake sale" in the Capitol to protest proposed reductions in federal education spending.

Jeffords's close tie with the NEA shows how far he is philosophically from his Republican colleagues, many of whom regularly excoriate the group for its refusal to support programs like school choice. Further proof of the split came at a recent meeting over the scholarship impasse. Jeffords proposed limiting the program to after-school tutoring. While this was unacceptable to scholarship supporters, they were taken aback when Jeffords revealed that the proposal had been given to him by Gordon Ambach, executive director of the Washington-based Council of Chief State School Officers. Market-oriented education reformers on Capitol Hill view Ambach as a foe of substantive reform in education.

It's hard to know what is making Jeffords so unyielding on the scholarships, but he is paying a price. Because he repeatedly has blocked federal grants enabling students mired in one of the country's worst school systems to study elsewhere, Jeffords is being compared to notorious figures such as George Wallace and Orval Faubus, who also stood against expanding educational opportunity. Despite the pressure, he con-



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tinues to resist lobbying by education reformers George Voinovich, Republican governor of Ohio, and John Norquist, Democratic mayor of Milwaukee, as well as Dole, who urged Jeffords to "take a second look" at the scholarships.

Equally obstructionist, though less publicized, were Jeffords's tactics during the debate on overhauling milk programs. When House Republicans made these programs symbols of a bygone era, Rep. Steve Gunderson of Wisconsin crafted a proposal to mostly deregulate the dairy industry. This would never win support from Jeffords, second-leading Senate recipient of PAC money from dairy cooperatives, who represents thousands of heavily subsidized farmers. Jeffords remained surprisingly silent about the Gunderson plan until Dole asked him in late October what was needed to win his support for the balanced budget. Jeffords then proposed his own milk program, which Jonathan Tolman of the Competitive Enterprise Institute calls "a dairy version of East Germany." A government commission would be created to set the price of milk, and it would be illegal for dairy farmers from any non-New England state to sell their goods in New England below the government price. Jeffords also made clear he would oppose any budget that included the Gunderson plan. A nasty fight was averted only when House Republicans couldn't agree among themselves on dairy reform, thus scuttling the effort. But Jeffords's maneuverings signaled he was prepared to hold up the budget to get his way.

Such obstinacy will not be forgotten. Jeffords is personally popular on both sides of the aisle and sings in a quartet with conservative Republican colleagues Trent Lott, John Ashcroft, and Larry Craig (the group recently performed on NBC's *Today* show). But popularity won't protect Jeffords from the consequences of his obstructionism. With Republican Senator Nancy Kassebaum retiring in 1996, he is slated to become chairman of the Labor and Human Resources Committee. Seniority used to govern such matters, but Senate Republicans adopted a rule this year whereby committee chairmen must win the approval of their colleagues by secret ballot. That's got to worry Jeffords. Considering his tactics on welfare, D.C. scholarships, and milk—coupled with the unforgettable fact that he was the only Senate Republican to support the Clinton health-care plan—the chances of his ever becoming chairman grow dimmer by the day. ♦

# Why Did Dole Do It?

**by Fred Barnes**

In a single TV appearance, Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole has destroyed the preferred strategy of some of his campaign advisers for softening the Republican abortion plank. They'd talked about a quiet effort next summer, after Dole has locked up the GOP presidential nomination but before the Republican convention in August, to gain agreement on a scaled-back pro-life position.

But his statement on December 17 that he no longer favors a constitutional amendment banning abortion ("I supported that one time, and I would not do it again") drew such a hostile reaction that he wound up noisily endorsing an amendment again. Now he doesn't have the flexibility to keep the amendment out of the 1996 Republican platform.

"This was a victory for those who want to keep the platform the way it is," insists Gary Bauer of the Family Research Council, who leaned on Dole to back an anti-abortion amendment anew. "It's almost on the verge of becoming counterproductive to even open the discussion with regard to leaving the amendment in or out [of the 1996 platform]," says Ralph Reed, executive director of the Christian Coalition. An amendment was endorsed in the GOP platforms in 1980, 1984, 1988, and 1992.

Counterproductive or not, there's another scheme for keeping it out in 1996 that's been suggested to the Dole camp. It calls for naming a prominent pro-lifer such as Rep. Henry Hyde or House Majority Leader Dick Armey as chairman of the platform committee next year. Then, the committee would draft a strongly worded pro-life plank but without any mention of a constitutional amendment. And Hyde or Armey would have enough moral clout on the issue to quell an insurrection by anti-abortion forces at the GOP convention.

Having botched things in his TV appearance, however, Dole is in no position to engineer this tricky maneuver. And ultimately he may not want to. The notion behind dropping the call for an amendment from the platform is that it produces pain but no gain: The amendment has no chance of passage, yet its presence in the platform prevents the GOP nominee from appealing to mildly pro-choice voters. This is unproven, though. There's no evidence the Republican presidential nominee ever suffered because the party had endorsed an anti-abortion amendment.

But GOP candidates often stumble on the abortion



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issue itself. It's ironic Dole should do this, since he has an impeccable pro-life voting record in 34 years in the Senate and House. But because of his klutzy performance on TV, "now he's got more problems on the issue than Lamar Alexander," Reed says. Alexander, a rival for the presidential nomination, opposes an amendment.

Dole's problems could be worse. Reed and Bauer, the two conservative leaders able to cause mass disenchantment with Dole among pro-lifers, are kindly disposed toward him. The day after Dole's TV statement, Bauer had a previously scheduled meeting with the Dole camp. Campaign officials satisfied him Dole wasn't flinching on abortion, Bauer says.

Reed put out a critical statement, but only after talking with Dole campaign aides. Rather than denounce Dole, Reed merely expressed disappointment. Dole "is also the only leading candidate who has declined to sign a pledge that he supports the pro-life plank in the Republican party platform," Reed adds. "That action, combined with [the TV] comment, raise[s] serious questions about his views on this most vital issue."

When Dole responded that he actually supports two types of anti-abortion amendments, Reed declared himself "fully satisfied." In a letter to Reed, Dole said he backs an amendment to overturn the 1973 *Roe* v. *Wade* decision that legalized abortion and also one "restricting abortion subject to the widely accepted exceptions for rape, incest, and life of the mother."

Reed says Dole has put the matter behind him "as long as there is no equivocation in the future, which I do not think will happen." Not quite. The issue has legs. Dole's challengers instantly jumped on his seeming flip-flop. "It's vintage Dole," said Senator Phil Gramm. The Gramm campaign orchestrated protests in Iowa, New Hamsphire, and South Carolina—states with early presidential contests in 1996—by anti-abortion leaders.

The flap also prompted a serious practical question about Dole as the Republican presidential nominee: Will he constantly be in hot water because of clumsy statements? Whether he wants to change the platform or not, Dole had nothing to gain from discussing abortion eight months before the convention. And his less-than-careful comment about an anti-abortion amendment was bound to be a red flag to pro-lifers, whom Dole has courted assiduously. Also, his remarks on possibly getting Colin Powell as his running mate had the inevitable effect of forcing Powell to voice distaste again for the vice presidency.

What amazed Pat Robertson, the head of the Christian Coalition, was not so much the substance of what Dole said about abortion, but that he seemed so ill-prepared in discussing it and Powell on national television. "Who is briefing Bob Dole?" Robertson asked. He concluded nobody is. ♦

# Jimmy and Amy on Tour

**by Matt Labash**

When last we left Jimmy Carter . . . Let's start over. Nobody ever really leaves Jimmy Carter, or, rather, he never really leaves us. He never just quilts or fly-fishes or goes to boring conferences, as a good ex-president should. No, heading his rump State Department, Plains Division, is a full-time endeavor, and even when not compromising American positions in geopolitical quagmires, sniping at sitting presidents in times of crisis, or conferring respectfully with terrorists, butchers, and other bad men, he always lurks on the periphery.

Even in off-Nobel season, having just lost out to those third-tier no-nukes Pugwashers, he stays primed, happening by D.C. to collect his National Caring Award, bestowed by the Caring Institute, and attending (online) Hiroshima's "Future of Hope" con-



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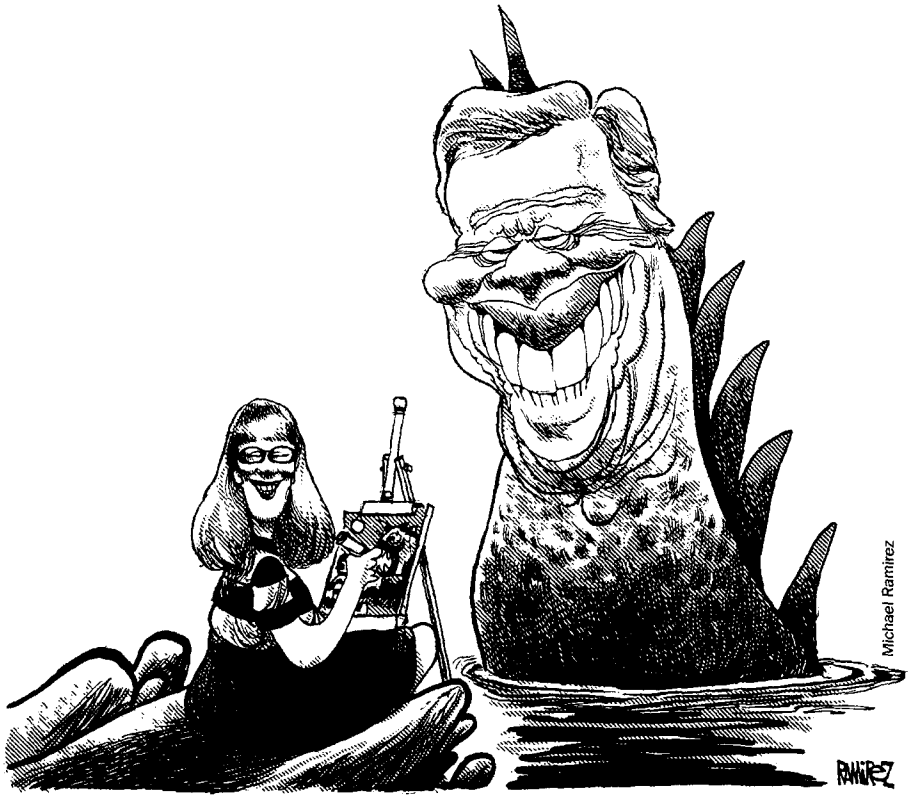
ference (which didn't sound too hopeful at all, according to the Asahi Evening News headline: "Panelists split on whether mankind will survive"). Also, to keep in touch with his public, he stopped by Borders Books the other day for a signing.




Carter and daughter Amy have produced *The Little Baby Snoogle-Fleejer*, a work for kids. More precious than the he-said/she-said ditherings of *Everything To Gain* (co-authored with wife Rosalynn) and as tin-eared and Tartuffian as his recent poetic offering, *Always a Reckoning* (which actually contains the titles "A Committee of Scholars Describe the Future Without Me" and "Why We Get Cheaper Tires From Liberia"), *Snoogle-Fleejer* is not, as it sounds, a cross between German engineering and phlegm. "It's kind of a beautiful sounding name," Carter explains. "And the little sea monster is ugly and fearsome but timid and kind and lonely." The story centers around a gimpy outcast who befriends the monster, who in turn finds lost treasure, enabling the crippled boy to pay for an operation for his terminally ill mother—the usual bale of Carter mirth.

The former president said he used to tell his kids the story at bedtime. Amy did the illustrations, which Carter has said "startled" him at first, "but I have grown to love them." For those who don't have the luxury of such an adjustment period, her rainbow-folkish renderings are from the school known as Peter-Max-teaches-remedial-Egyptian-fingerpainting-to-aging-student-activists.

That didn't stop an adoring public from lining up 700 deep on this December afternoon, with five and six books per person, four hours prior to signing time. To them it was a chance to square up to the greatest president of the late 70s for the two to three seconds it took him to sign his name without looking at the purchaser. For me, it was a chance to ask Amy why she named her cat "Yasser."

She looked gawky and petrified and said, "I don't want to talk about that." Nor did the Secret Service steakheads, with their thick-necked menace sheathed in crisp Kuppenheimer navy, who brushed me back until after the signing.

"Isn't he a nice man?" one father said to bawling tow-headed twins. "He's a model ex-president," said another admirer. "It's adorable," said someone else of the book. "I like to get famous people to sign baseballs," explained a guy who'd just gotten Amy Carter to sign his baseball.

"That man is a national treasure," said former Defense secretary Robert McNamara, no stranger himself to public adulation, passing through on his way to the sound recordings. After the idolaters finished, I posed a question to the treasure himself.

"Who currently is your favorite dictator, strongman, or agent of genocide, and can peace be made with him?"

"Favorite dictator?" he answered. "Let me think for a minute. Well, I don't know who the leader is now of North Korea, but I got along well with Kim Il Sung when he agreed to stop the development of his nuclear weapons, and I presume his son is still continuing that." (The son is Kim Jong Il, whom Carter recently begged to attend the '96 Olympics in Atlanta.)

When Amy's turn came around again, I asked her whether she would still describe her political philosophy as "feminist socialist." She said, "Ummm . . . sure!"

"If capitalism's so bad, why are you on a book tour?"

"I think that when asked my political opinions,"



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she said, "and they are reflected in part by both theory—you know I'm obviously extremely pro-choice, for gay rights, and would love to vote for a president less conservative than Clinton." I pressed on.

"Of all the times you've been arrested [she was arrested four times before being bounced out of Brown for rampant activism], where's your favorite holdilng pen?"

"It was definitely the best to get arrested with Abbie," said Amy, referring to fabled 60s yippie Abbie Hoffman, with whom she protested on-campus CIA recruitment, engaged in numerous acts of CD (their term for civil disobedience), and denied they were an item, though the late Hoffman was obviously under her spell when he said Amy had "a shot at being the first woman president."

These weren't the only questions. There were those of 21-year-old Chantal, who came up behind me and a cameraman, munching a complimentary bookstore sugar cookie. "Who's that?" she queried, looking straight into Carter's face.

"It's Jimmy Carter," said the cameraman.

"Who's he?" she followed with no sign of embarrassment.

"He was the president," the cameraman explained.

Chantal, still confused: "Of Border's Books?" ♦

# THE PROPHET IN WINTER

**by David Aikman**

*Moscow*

HIS HEALTH IS LESS RELIABLE NOW, and the strain of life—not just in the Gulag half a century ago but also in the struggling Russia of today— has taken its toll. He still walks briskly, but he rests more, and he measures his public appearances with the careful weighing of necessity and risk that helped him survive the years in Stalin's prisons. Yet while he may be feeble, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn is nonetheless hard to surprise, and the reemergence of Russia's Communists in the Dec. 17 parliamentary election certainly did not take him unawares. Ever since his return to the country in May 1994 after 18 years' involuntary exile in Vermont, the Nobel laureate has listened intently to ordinary Russians. His broad-brush conclusion: Russia's woes are the result less of bad policies pursued by President Boris Yeltsin than of democracy's shallow roots and oligarchical features, an almost total absence of self-government at the local level, and average Russians' unwillingness to admit exactly how evil Communism was during its seven decades in power.

For the first few months back in his homeland, Solzhenitsyn was courted by politicians of several parties, including Yeltsin, who actually had telephoned the writer in Vermont on one of his official visits to the United States. But if either the democrats or the ultranationalists hoped that Solzhenitsyn's prestige would boost their cause, they were disappointed. Soon after his return to Russia he dismissed Vladimir Zhirinovsky as a "caricature of a patriot," and when he addressed the Russian Duma 14 months ago, he castigated that body for its "scandals, boycotts, walkouts," as well as for the "shallowness" of some bills it had passed. Russian democrats were pointedly reserved in their applause. Several days before the Dec. 17 election, Solzhenitsyn signaled his disgust with all 43 party blocs by announcing that he would not even vote.

What does the writer want? From Samara to Orel to Almaty, Solzhenitsyn has declared his ethnic and territorial hopes for his country: a union of the three Slav republics of Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus and of the ethnically Russian part of Kazakhstan, which he feels is suffering cultural discrimination as Kazakhstan revives its Islamic heritage. But as a visitor discovered who interviewed the writer with a TV crew recently, Solzhenitsyn emphatically does not seek what some of his fiercest critics—in Russia as well as the West—accuse him of wanting: He disavows monarchy, dictatorship, empire, and anti-Semitism as recipes either for Russia or for any other country. The 19th-century Slavophile idea of Russia as a state with a messianic mission he dismisses brusquely as "a blunder."

**ALEKSANDR SOLZHENITSYN'S PRESCRIPTION FOR RUSSIA'S FLEDGLING DEMOCRACY: MORAL RECKONING AND TRUTH TELLING.**

What Solzhenitsyn advocates is not political reform but moral change. The essential issue in Russia today, he says, is "repentance: repentance by those who did the coercing, who were the executioners, who mocked the people in exile." He wants Russia to go through the same self-questioning that Germany was



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forced to undergo after the defeat of Nazism. Whereas the Nazi ideology was denounced root and branch, Solzhenitsyn says, Communism wasn't. It was "like a radical branch of humanism," Solzhenitsyn says, "so no one could easily condemn it."

But if Solzhenitsyn's rejection of Marxist-Leninist ideas gives comfort to free-marketeers, he shares with his fellow anti-Communist Pope John Paul II a deep dissatisfaction with unfettered, amoral capitalism.

Dolores Motichka

Russians, and the rest of mankind, he insists, must learn "first not to grab their neighbor's throat and not to grab his piece of bread, not to grab what they do not need." Unrestrained industrial and commercial expansion, he believes, could eventually bring about a global crisis of both economics and environment.

Solzhenitsyn, in effect, remains today what he always was: an example to his people and to the world. But does anyone listen? At the moment, ordinary Russians seem too preoccupied with mere survival—or if they are entrepreneurs, with making lots of money very quickly—to heed his almost archaic calls for a moral reckoning. Neither his novels, even staples like *The First Circle* and *Cancer Ward*, nor his social and political writings are to be found in Moscow's major bookstores.

A few months ago, Moscow television abruptly pulled his 15-minute fortnightly TV talk show without personally informing him. Later, on another talk show in the city of Samara, some 500 miles from Moscow, a phone-in questioner asked him what he would do if the Communists came back to power, and he wryly responded: "Well, I think my mouth got shut a little earlier than the caller anticipated, before the Communists came to power."

Observant and intelligent younger Russians clearly respect him but do not believe he is relevant to the problems of their country. "If you stop being popular among young people, you are not asking the important questions anymore," says Artyom Borovik, the youthful editor of a saucy, muckraking weekly called *Sovershenno Sekretno* (*Completely Secret*), who nevertheless admires Solzhenitsyn's immense courage in facing down Brezhnev's KGB thugs two decades ago. "People do not read him anymore," says a young hotel worker as she hurries off to her duties.

Today, Solzhenitsyn lives comfortably in a dacha outside Moscow that, typically, took nearly a year longer to complete than the smiling builders, private entrepreneurs, had promised. He still keeps the apartment just behind Tversky Street (formerly Gorky Street) where the KGB wrestled him into a black Volga before his sudden exile in 1974. When he ventures outside the building, older Russians often come up to talk to him, believing that the great writer will somehow be able miraculously to solve some infernal problem they have had with the bureaucracy. It is a continuation of the quaint old Russian notion of the writer as a sort of "second government." He is much encouraged, meanwhile, by his intelligent and gutsy wife, Natalya, and his Harvard-educated son, Yermolai, in his early twenties, who often acts as interpreter when Solzhenitsyn writes or speaks for foreign audiences.

Reminded by a visitor of the Russian proverb he quoted in his Nobel speech, "One word of truth outweighs the whole world," Solzhenitsyn insists he is "sure and confident" of its validity, despite the dismal evidence of truth-seeking in the chaos of post-Communist Russia.

"I live on it and stand on it," says the bearded patriarch of Russia's search for national integrity at the end of the 20th century. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn may be no politician or social reformer, but he is still a patriot. And a prophet, perhaps, in Russia's latest winter of discontent.

***David Aikman, a former* Time *senior correspondent, has reported periodically from Moscow since 1985.***



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# Are They Bishops or Pawns?

**by Robert A. Sirico**

A FAVORITE THEME OF THE MEDIA is that the Catholic hierarchy is out of touch with lay people. It's an easy story. The Vatican objects to birth control; many Catholics use it. Catholics want women priests and a married clergy; Rome stands in the way.

This analysis apparently goes only so far. An overwhelming majority of Catholics now disagree with the current liberal political agenda. Yet the Administrative Board of the U.S. Catholic Conference, the lobbying arm of the American bishops, in a statement entitled "Political Responsibility" issued in October, has taken an aggressive stand in favor of the welfare state just in time for the presidential race. It condemns much of the Republican agenda in startlingly strong, indeed partisan terms.

On most issues, the statement sharply contradicts the voting choices of growing numbers of Catholics. In 1994, a majority of Catholics (over 54 percent, according to Times-Mirror polls) supported Republicans and their promise of lower taxes, smaller government, and curbs on welfare. A plurality of white, non-Hispanic Catholics now call themselves Republican.

In a recent poll conducted by the Catholic Campaign for America, 76 percent of Catholic lay people agreed that welfare makes recipients "become more dependent on such programs"; 89 percent favored merit over race- and sex-based government programs. Small wonder: Catholics see, in the transformation of poverty from an economic problem to a cultural and moral problem, the abject failure of welfare.

Is a chasm developing between U.S. Catholic laity and the U.S. Catholic Conference's policy bureaucrats, who would like public policy makers to believe that they represent the Catholic community? Certainly. But instead of pointing out the irony, the media used the recent statement to fuel the ideological wars. Opportunistic secular liberals were delighted to invoke the moral voice of the Catholic Church on behalf of Great Society programs the Clinton administration is trying to preserve.

"Political Responsibility" just suits their purposes. The product of a left-wing lay bureaucracy—merely a set of policy suggestions, not binding on any individual Catholic conscience—the statement displays an obvious political bias. It starts by setting up a straw man. There is, says the conference, a "growing temptation" to blame "economic insecurity and moral decline" on "too much compassion." (Really? What proposed reform has been based on the proposition that the American people are too compassionate?) But, we are admonished, "our problems . . . cannot be blamed only on people who are poor and powerless. The 'rich and famous' and the rest of us have at least as much responsibility as the 'least among us.'" That will shake up the reprobates who have been running around saying our nation's troubles are the fault of the "powerless," if such people exist. The statement proffers sentimentality about the poor as a substitute for sound policy.

The text reflects no serious awareness of the critics of modern liberal policies, though these include growing numbers of Catholic scholars and laity. Instead it assumes that all desire for policy change springs from mean-spiritedness. There is a disclaimer of partisan preference: "Our moral framework does not easily fit the categories of right or left, Republican or Democrat," the statement says; while Catholics should "protect the unborn and defend the family," they must "also insist that a test of public advocacy is how public policies touch the *poor* and *weak*." But it is hard to miss the intended political impact. The staff who wrote this statement want Catholics to vote for Democrats and support their policies—abortion excepted.

"The most urgent priority for domestic economic policy is to create jobs with adequate pay and decent working conditions," says the statement, with no mention of any broader need for economic growth. "Underemployment" is "morally unacceptable," but the term is not defined. "The minimum wage should be raised to help workers and their families live decent lives"; the evidence that doing so will increase unemployment apparently has been rejected. "Salaries and benefits of teachers" should "reflect the principles of economic justice," which, we can suppose, means salaries should be raised. Can one really believe that support for "food stamps, WIC, school lunches and other federal programs" is nonpartisan or that it is the only way to fulfill the moral obligation to the poor?

Health care reform, we are told, should mean "priority concern for the poor, universal coverage, pluralism, cost containment and controls, and equitable financing." Hillary Clinton couldn't have put it any better. Nor would Al Gore quarrel with the environmental agenda, which should not "place a disproportionate burden on poor people and communities of color" and takes a bold stand against "environmental racism." Indeed, the government "has a moral responsibility to take the lead in helping to alleviate poverty through sustainable development," a term synonymous with the green politics of the left.

The strongest words of the document come in the



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declaration that racism is "not merely one sin among many" but "a radical evil." The authors therefore "support judiciously administered affirmative-action programs as tools to overcome discrimination and its continuing effects." There is no mention of merit or the social divisions created by race-based quotas, much less any hint that such policies themselves might be racist.

Contrast this statement's commendable indignation about racism with its thoughts on violent crime: The word sin is not used, nor are murder and rape described as radical evils. Instead, the statement urges attention to the "root causes of violence, including poverty, substance abuse, lack of opportunity, racism and family disintegration." The liberal litany continues: We must help refugees, increase humanitarian aid to foreign countries, institute global environmental planning—and ward off welfare reform.

William Bramhall

What is omitted from the Catholic Conference statement is any discussion of subsidiarity, a core principle of Catholic social thought. The idea of subsidiarity (which parallels the American concept of federalism) is that higher orders of society can intervene in the affairs of lower orders only in the case of obvious failure. Intervention must be limited in extent and duration, must prove to be of overall benefit, and must not permanently replace mediating institutions. Pope John Paul II writes at length about subsidiarity in his ground-breaking 1991 social encyclical, "Centesimus Annus."

In the encyclical, the pope decries the "malfunctions and defects" of the welfare state. These lead to "a loss of human energies and an inordinate increase in public agencies which are dominated more by bureaucratic ways of thinking than by concern for serving their clients." They also engender "an enormous increase in spending." Social needs, he writes, "are best understood and satisfied by people who are closest to them and who act as neighbors to those in need."

The pope's few words offer clearer moral and practical guidance than the whole of the conference's statement, which has all the earmarks of a committee product. In many ways, it recalls the depressing moral abdication of the mainline Protestant churches. Politically correct at every turn, they manage to forget that there is more to political economy than sentiment and that churches do not thrive as primarily political organizations.

How sad it is that the major statement to come from the U.S. Catholic Conference in the electoral season should be so ill-considered and politically biased. It is doubly sad that the institution operating the nation's largest network of private social-service agencies cannot see the evangelistic potential of the present challenge and welcome the opportunity to undertake what the welfare state has failed to accomplish—the care and comfort of America's authentically needy.

The trouble is that some in the American Catholic bureaucracy haven't realized that the plunder of American wealth in support of a system that has failed by every conceivable measure (including the abortions it has encouraged) is itself immoral. Millions of Catholic laity and the clergy who back them understand that sincerity does not equal rationality in politics. It is time for the American Catholic bureaucracy to catch up.

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# Abortion and the Republican Party

## *Three Responses*

**Editor's Note:** *Noemie Emery's essay "Abortion and the Republican Party: A New Approach," in our December 25 issue, has prompted significant discussion. We print three responses below and expect to continue this conversation in issues to come.*

## *William J. Bennett*

What is most impressive about Noemie Emery's article is its moral force. She paints a searingly accurate portrait of what happens to a society when abortion-on-demand is granted constitutional protection and celebrated as a breakthrough for "women's rights." In fact, the abortion-rights advocates have helped to create a world which is more dehumanizing, brutal, coarse, predatory, anti-woman, anti-child. Emery understands that this outcome is *not* incidental; it is inevitable. Such are the radiating cultural effects, the social end game, of those who put a premium on "choice-driven morals."

Emery also provides an honest assessment of current political realities. Her tactical advice to the pro-life movement rests on the assumption that most of America "thinks abortion is almost always wrong and should sometimes be legal." Assuming Emery is right—and I believe she is—the question becomes: What kind of tactical and strategic approach will do the most to move the debate forward and significantly reduce the number of abortions in America?

Emery thinks the pro-life movement should focus much more of its attention on moral persuasion and less on legal remedies. Not because there is anything intrinsically wrong with legal remedies. Rather, given current political realities, a moral/cultural approach will be more effective. Such an approach would find strong public support—including among many Democrats who are deeply troubled by the massive number of abortions that take place every year but who remain uncertain of what the proper legal status ought to be. It would also succeed in isolating and exposing the radical nature of the pro-abortion movement—those who have not yet found a single abortion of which they disapprove.

Emery's arguments, though compelling, are nonetheless incomplete. My advice would be to support a pro-life strategy that goes a good deal beyond what she lays out in her article (perhaps she agrees; we need to hear more from her). Specifically: A pro-life Republican party should hold that *Roe* v. *Wade* was wrongly decided and ought to be overturned; oppose the use of public funds to pay for abortion; and support legislative efforts to expand the boundaries of legal protection for the unborn—including restricting abortions after viability, ending late-term abortions and sex-selection abortions, and establishing waiting periods, informed consent, parental notification, and other such measures. These are legal reforms which our nation can sustain, which would reinforce Emery's culture-based strategy, and which would move along, even as they do not completely out-distance, a polity that believes abortion ought to be legal only some of the time.

I do not think that the Republican party should insist on a constitutional amendment to ban all abortions. Hence I favor a modified—but still vigorously pro-life—platform. But whether I am right and a constitutional amendment is counter-productive, or whether I am wrong and a constitutional amendment is a useful (though unrealistic) goal to keep, Emery is surely right in her attempt to move the empha-



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sis from the legal to the moral venue. Why? Because building a moral and political consensus is the necessary precondition for legal reform. Emery makes a persuasive case that pro-lifers who advocate to a deeply conflicted public the least popular, least sustainable legal remedy (i.e., a constitutional amendment) are making a moral and political consensus much more difficult to establish. Some in the pro-life cause will continue to condemn and alienate millions of would-be allies—perhaps Emery among them. They will continue to make the centerpiece of their strategy the only position on the continuum where most Americans simply will not follow. We need to accept the fact that absent a new, broad consensus, little will really change. The intellectual debate will go back and forth. Some will falsely frame the debate, speaking as though one's position on a constitutional amendment will actually determine whether or not there will be 1.5 million abortions in America next year. Some will exalt the purity of their own position. And all the while the giant abortion machine will continue to grind on.

***William J. Bennett is a co-director of Empower America and a fellow at the Heritage Foundation.***

## *John J. DiIulio, Jr.*

Noemie Emery conjectures that Republicans could consolidate and expand their recent electoral gains by moderating their views on abortion. Apparently, Sen. Bob Dole now thinks so, too. But he's skating on thin strategic ice, and, in any case, such moral irresolution from a self-professed pro-life candidate is unbecoming at best.

There are dozens of post-1973 scientific opinion surveys on abortion. They show that most Americans favor a woman's right to obtain an abortion in cases of rape, incest, severe birth defects, or acute threats to the mother's life, but would deny her right to choose because she is poor or can't afford more children, is unmarried or doesn't want to marry the baby's father, or is married but simply doesn't feel like giving birth. About two-thirds of voters who identify themselves as strongly committed Republicans oppose abortion on demand; ditto for strongly committed Democrats.

No presidential contest has turned on abortion, but it's clear that Ronald Reagan and George Bush were helped, not hurt, by their party's "immoderate" abortion platform, and that abortion figured hardly at all in Bush's 1992 defeat. Go find the millions of registered voters who would have switched to Reagan or Bush if the Republicans had sounded more like Pat Schroeder, less like Pat Buchanan, on abortion; they don't exist.

And mind the example of Pennsylvania's former two-term Democratic governor, no-exceptions pro-lifer Bob Casey. Casey is a true social policy progressive—no welfare caps, family-friendly tax reform, and more. He believes that Democrats should fight for the rights of the poor and the powerless, from the unborn to the unemployed. He governed as he preached. In his 1990 reelection bid, one ardently pro-choice primary opponent ran television ads equating him to a rapist. And most voters disagreed with his belief that abortion should be banned. Still, he won in a landslide. For an encore, he bested Planned Parenthood and the rest of the abortions-for-kids crowd in a major court decision on parental notification. Today, 50 million Americans are getting his message: The mass response to the recent profile of Casey's life and beliefs in *Reader's Digest* has been tremendous.

Naturally, however, the "New" Democrats wouldn't dare let Casey be heard at their Old Abortionists '92 convention. Nothing shames or troubles them, not even third-trimester partial-birth abortions. Never more than an after-cocktails liberal cliché, "safe, legal, and rare" (why so rare if it's so right?) fails the moral giggle test. Now the joke belongs to the GOP.

Maybe the New Republicans won't let the spellbinding pro-life candidate Alan Keyes speak at their '96 convention. Maybe they want to tone down the volume on abortion while turning it up on cutting the capital gains tax and gutting guaranteed federal welfare and medical support for poor children. If so, they merit Rep. Barney Frank's biting description as folks who believe that life begins at conception but ends at birth.

Rep. Henry Hyde is one of the few men in power today who, agree with him or not on abortion, crime, welfare, term limits, and other issues, inspires trust and exudes honesty. He has promised to schedule public hearings on post-*Roe* biomedical advances in understanding prenatal development. The sights, science, and sounds will educate everyone, wrench hearts, and



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change millions of minds. Dole and other Republican leaders ought to tune in even if the pro-choice press and the White House tune out.

Dole's latest word on abortion was spoken in virtually the same breath as his latest vote for Colin Powell as his running mate. But Republican strategists and spin-meisters have totally misread the Powell phenomenon. It isn't that Powell is a moderate. It's that he so clearly comes by his moderation honestly, authentically, and on the basis of his own lived experiences.

Like Casey, Powell is quite simply a morally centered grownup whom many people will listen to and follow even if they disagree with him on abortion or other issues. One-size-fits-all moderation may be chic, but it is morally suspect and, in the end, it won't sell.

With pro-life Republicans suddenly content to dole out abortions, it's no wonder that the American people are groping toward a third party. On abortion and other soul-of-the-nation issues, both President Clinton and Dole seem increasingly tone deaf to the silent majority's silent screams for courage, conviction, and compassion.

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## *Phyllis Schlafly*

The Republican party has held five national conventions since the *Roe* v. *Wade* decision. In 1976 and 1980, the convention platforms called for "a constitutional amendment to restore protection of the right to life for unborn children." The 1984, 1988, and 1992 platforms declared that "the unborn child has a fundamental individual right to life which cannot be infringed" and reaffirmed support for "a human life amendment to the Constitution."

With these unequivocal words, Republicans became the majority party for the first time since the 1920s. Grass-roots Americans who believe in those platforms invested their own time, money, energy, and principles on the battleground of politics. This coalition of conservative and pro-life voters elected, first, an authentic pro-life conservative as president, Ronald Reagan, and then a pro-life conservative Congress.

Republicans achieved these victories not by equivocating or compromising, but by articulating a consistent pro-life conservative vision. In the 1994 congressional election, not a single pro-life Republican congressman was defeated, and the newly elected Republican members of Congress are two-to-one pro-life. Pro-life votes for Republican candidates are the reason why Republicans have a majority in the House of Representatives for the first time in 42 years.

It is curious why anyone would want to quarrel with such spectacular success. One can only assume that those who do are uninformed about political history—unless the real goal is to grease the way for the nomination of a Republican presidential or vice-presidential candidate who will not run on the party's historic platform.

Noemie Emery wants Republicans "to move the battle from the legal to the moral venue" and assume "the moral, not the legal, pose." She has it exactly backwards. The moral venue already exists in the holy books of the world's great religions. Translating moral principles into public policy objectives is precisely the function of politics and of a political party.

Emery urges the Republican party to abandon the fight to make abortion illegal and instead "frame an attack based on moral dissuasion, based in a war for the soul of the country." But the Great Communicator himself, Ronald Reagan, did precisely that when he proclaimed National Sanctity of Human Life Day on January 14, 1988. Failure to bring about political change allowed Americans to continue to commit a million and a half abortions a year.

Abraham Lincoln attacked the hypocrisy of his time in these words: "You say that you think slavery is wrong, but you denounce all attempts to restrain it. Is there anything else that you think wrong, that you are not willing to deal with as a wrong? Why are you so careful, so tender of this one wrong and no other?"

In 1996, the Republican party must not be lured into adopting Emery's "pose." It must deal with abortion not as just a moral wrong, but as a political wrong. To abandon its historic pledge to support efforts to restore constitutional protection to innocent human life would not only be wrong, it would destroy its winning electoral coalition.

***Phyllis Schlafly is president of the Eagle Forum and national chairman of the Republican National Coalition for Life.***



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# THE DIRTY LITTLE SECRET OF EDUCATIONAL TV

**By James Bowman**

The discussion of children's television in Washington has tended to center around a constitutional question: Does the government have the right to impose content controls on broadcasting? Broadcasters have a ready answer for this. Of course not, they say, any more than government has the right to tell newspapers or magazines what to print. But they are tripped up, struck dumb, when the discussion turns away from their rights and toward their obligations—their duty as good citizens to have a concern for the welfare of the next generation. Even if broadcasters have a right to produce mind-rotting junk cartoons for children, are they justified in doing so?

Newton Minow, who famously called television "a vast wasteland" when he was President Kennedy's FCC commissioner, asks just this question in his new book, *Abandoned in the Wasteland: Children, Television and the First Amendment* (written with Craig L. Lamay). Are broadcasters like tobacco companies, whose indisputably legal activities are nevertheless increasingly regarded by the press and the public as morally tainted? Minow and Lamay conclude that they are. But they do so only by virtue of having made the same assumption that nearly everyone involved in the debate makes—that it is easy to define what the Children's Television Act of 1990 calls "the educational and informational needs" of America's TV-addicted children.

After all, everybody knows that *Sesame Street* and *Reading Rainbow* and *Bill Nye the Science Guy* are "educational" (partly because they usually appear on PBS, which, older readers will remember, used to be called National Educational Television); everybody knows, too, that the commercial cartoon series *Tiny Toon Adventures*, *Animaniacs*, and *Batman* are not "educational"—at least not in the sense of being thought wholesome and desirable for children to watch. But is what everybody knows the truth?

Evidence is hard to come by. Indeed, the entire research history of the study of the effects of children's programming is relegated to a single footnote in the FCC's 50-page "Notice of Proposed Rule Making" of April 7, 1995, on new ideas for the enforcement of the Children's Television Act. Proponents cite a new study by Aletha C. Huston and John C. Wright of the Center for Research on the Influences of Television on Children at the University of Kansas, which concludes that *Sesame Street* and its like are good for kids because "preschoolers in low-income areas around Kansas City who had watched educational television programming, including *Sesame Street*, not only were better prepared for school but actually performed better on verbal and math tests as late as age 7 than would have been expected otherwise." Better than what? Better than a control group of children who watched "adult programming and educational cartoons." Oh, by the way, the study was sponsored by the Children's Television Workshop, producers of *Sesame Street.*

Even supposing that the findings of Huston and Wright (from a sample of only 250) are accurate—who is to say that the researchers are not trying to establish, as Dr. Johnson put it, the precedence between a louse and a flea? If it is marginally better to watch *Sesame Street* than *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, does it follow that it is good to watch either? And what about the effects, if any, *after* age 7? Thomas D. Cook of Northwestern University concluded the opposite—that "kids who watched for a season gained about two letters of the alphabet."

The truth that everybody really does know, but doesn't quite say, is this: TV, whether "commercial" or "educational," isn't good for you. It isn't good for adults, and it's worse for children. Given that we do

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not live in the sort of society in which it is possible to ban it, but rather in a society in which parents are eager to offload their responsibilities for limiting the damage onto politicians and policymakers, the latter have a strong incentive to foster the illusion that TV can be made into a Force for Good. If only the government regulates it properly, the adherents of educational television fondly suppose, the cathode-ray tube will become a window on the world, a universal access point to the arts and sciences of mankind, one that will transform us through the miracle of technology into a nation of scholars and poets, of connoisseurs and craftsmen, of geniuses and gentlefolk.

This is sheer self-deception. At its best, television is light entertainment. And anything that was not light entertainment before being translated into televisionese, like *Masterpiece Theatre* versions of literary classics, becomes light entertainment by the mere fact of appearing on it. Opera, ballet, serious drama, serious discussions, all approach the condition of soap opera when adapted for television. Occasionally, educated adults may profit by watching a lecture or a documentary, but even such "high-brow" programming is characteristically superficial and liberally livened up with the tricks of commercial entertainment.

Illustrations by Kevin Chadwick

And what, then, of children? They, who have no intellectual context in which to place the constant stream of moving images, will never gain anything of any educational use from it. For learning is never passive. Learning requires the active participation of the learner in answering questions, repeating or re-enacting what he has been told, and formulating out of reading and discussion a point of view that is not ready-made for him—a point of view that is his own. But television is *the* passive medium. Recent studies suggest that even supposedly "interactive" computer learning is too passive an activity to have much in the way of measurable effects on children's learning. How much more instantly forgettable are the totally passive experiences of television?

To prove the point, watch a program like *Where in the World is Carmen Sandiego?*, which is meant to teach geography and history. The show features a routine chase cartoon of a bad guy (or in this case gal—the titular Carmen Sandiego) pursued by a committee made up of a young man, a young woman, and an old man. The day I watched with my 9-year-old son, Carmen Sandiego stole some artifacts from the Museum of the American Indian in Santa Fe, New Mexico, which allowed the show's producers to graft on some information about Santa Fe and the museum. My son watched in rapt attention. Afterwards he remembered the story but, when asked where it took place, he thought for a moment and then ventured: "Mexico?"

This is not (I say fondly) a stupid child. He merely takes from the succession of images presented to him that which its own logic has determined is important. In the same way, the internal logic of *Sesame Street* dictates that the songs and the sketches and the jokes occupy the foreground while the numbers and the letters are incidental. Why should we expect children to think these have more importance than the show itself attributes to them? The makers of these "educational" shows know that the educational substance has been relegated to an invisible background, but it is the fundamental premise on which they work: Kids will watch only if they don't know they're going to learn something.

Thus, the makers of educational television reveal themselves beholden to the most basic principle of educational theory of the last 60 or 70 years. Even before television, there was a dangerous tendency among the most highly regarded educators to turn



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schools into inferior amusement parks. Learning can be fun, they said; tear down the walls in schools, let the creativity of children run free, and all will be well. It is certainly a nice idea, but it flies in the face of common experience: We all know that learning, particularly in its early stages, is actually painful. Happily, nature has made the most painful bits least painful to the young. Practicing scales is tedious in the extreme compared with playing Mozart, but it is less tedious to small children who don't yet know what Mozart is. Learning irregular verbs is an awful chore, but the irritation is more easily borne by those who are as yet innocent of the ambition to read Proust.

Along the way—and here television played a crucial role—the educational establishment altered its maxim from "learning can be fun" to "learning must be fun." It must be transmitted through computers, and through television sets, and through games—must, in other words, be delivered by the same means that children receive their entertainment. And thus it short-circuited nature's way of preparing us for serious scholarship—learning patience, and attentiveness, and the rewards that come from the careful perusal of a subject over time.

Few outside what William J. Bennett called "the education blob" believe the "education must be fun" theory has been anything short of a disaster. And still Washington is so committed to the idea that it feels compelled to require the broadcast of shows developed according to its assumptions. The idea that educational television isn't educational never comes up in public policy debates. And it should.

This is not to say that children learn nothing from television. Indeed, they learn quite a lot of things not traditionally thought of as priority items in the catalogue of "educational and informational needs." But they should not be dismissed, because, like it or not, they are part of the cultural glue that binds America together. Television teaches a language—and it is a language that, from the time of radio onward, every American child has learned to speak. What a universal entertainment medium can teach is a certain sophistication, a sense of irony, and an encyclopedic knowledge of pop culture—and no legislation is needed to generate it.

Right now, the best example of this is a cartoon show called *Animaniacs*, a Steven Spielberg production that is the second most popular children's series on television, next to *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers*. It brings to life the supposed Warner brothers, Wakko and Yakko, and a Warner sister called Dot, who have supposedly been shut up in the Warner Bros. studio water tower for misbehavior. They sing and dance and perform little sketches—like singing the ingredients listed on a carton of ice cream or enacting the gravedigger scene from *Hamlet* in the original (Wakko and Yakko play Hamlet and the sexton). Dot provides a slang translation from the lower left-hand corner of the screen.

At the end of the show, the three of them trundle out "The Wheel of Morality" from which they obtain "Today's Lesson." This might go something like this: "The answer is blowing in the wind—except in New Jersey, where what's blowing in the wind smells funny." It might seem troublesome that "morality" is being made fun of. But what's being parodied here is not true morality, but rather the "educational messages" that appear at the end of other shows for children—messages that are tacked on to make broadcasters feel as though they are adding a little "education" to shows that are otherwise half-hour toy advertisements.

*Mighty Morphin Power Rangers*, which is intended for much smaller children than *Animaniacs*, features highly moralistic plot lines and clearly identified good and evil characters, topped off by some explicit preaching at the end, mainly about the environment. This kind of cant always causes a backlash; my own children take it as a mark of their maturity that they can make fun of it. That is what *Animaniacs* plays upon—the ways in which popular culture plays upon itself and helps children to develop a sense of irony that happily alerts them to crude attempts at indoctri-



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nation or to the hypocrisies of their elders. One of the cartoons on *Animaniacs* features a baby girl called Mindy who, like Sweetpea in the old "Popeye" cartoons, is always wandering off and innocently placing herself in situations of the utmost peril—from which she always contrives to escape with a fool's luck. Back in the 1930s, 40s and 50s, Popeye, Bluto, and Olive Oyl were all frantically in pursuit of poor Sweetpea, fearful in their quaint adult way of what might happen to him as he wandered on skyscraper girders or along canyon ledges. Mindy, by contrast, is shadowed only by her dog, Buttons, who tries to keep her out of various disasters in her path and inevitably succumbs to them himself. Her parents are not only absent; they are usually off at a "better parenting conference" or a lecture on the endangered rain forest.

Even more remarkable are the examples of self-irony. On yet another segment of *Animaniacs*, Katie Kaboom, a pretty cheerleader type of high-school age, is immensely pleased with herself for landing as her "steady" the very popular CB. Her parents, however, are faced with the melancholy duty of pointing out to her that the guy is unsuitable. In spite of a clearly strong academic and athletic record, and the consensus that he is a real campus leader, he is not the guy for Katie because he is, well, a chicken. Katie, whose claim to cartoonish distinction is, as her name suggests, her explosive (and essentially infantile) temper, becomes furious with her parents. "You never like my friends!" she screeches at them, as she swells up and turns red. Then, as everyone runs for cover, she literally explodes.

Later, she also lets CB have it: "Why didn't you tell me?" Though she has demolished the family home, she turns to her mother in tears, expecting and getting her sympathy, and says: "Mom? CB and I broke up!" This startling refusal to take teenage suffering seriously—this willingness to make fun of it, in fact—represents something of a psychic and cultural advance by the children of baby boomers, for whom the narcissism and self-dramatization typical of the early days of the youth culture are still among the cultural shibboleths of their generation.

I don't want to oversell the wit and wisdom and sophistication of commercial programming for kids, but its techniques do help one understand the post-modern style now so common in film, theater, fiction, and all the arts and sure to become still more common. Another example is provided by the Fox Saturday morning cartoon show, *The Tick*, which offers what might be called "second-generation irony." First there were the superheroes; then there were the ironic superheroes; now there are the *really* ironic superheroes. The children of those who enjoyed the campy, ironic style of *Batman* back in the 1960s are now watching send-ups of the send-ups that their parents enjoyed. The Tick is one of a group of crimefighters costumed as unlikely or imaginary animals (others are Duh Fledermaus and the Sewer Urchin) who take a road trip, looking for fun, and wind up at a hotel advertising "Superheroes Welcome."

Sidekicks, alas, are not quite so welcome. And so the Tick's assistant, Arthur the Moth, is told to go round the back to the Sidekicks' Lounge, a cramped sergeants' mess where he pals up with a lugubrious caped Wonderdog. "I been kickin' all over this country for a superhero with a brain the size of a walnut," says Wonderdog, who is himself in therapy trying to transform himself from a violent to "a more centered, whole person." Aggressive remarks from others he treats as primitive manifestations: "This is just what my therapist was talking about: Violence never solves anything. Put violence in the happy box," he says—amusingly appealing, perhaps, to a considerable population of more or less cynical little boys whose little-boy pugnacity, deemed "inappropriate" in the 1990s, has landed them in counseling.

Meanwhile, in the club for superheroes, the Tick meets an extremely campy fellow in a toga with a model of a vaguely classical ruin on his head who describes himself as "Agrippa, the Roman God of Aqueducts" and a foxy little superheroine called Jett Valkyrie. When his companion makes a suggestive remark to American Maid (dressed in a red-white-and-blue apron), she replies with an almost feminist tartness: "You've got 'arrested development' written all over you, Fledermaus." In another episode, where the club of superheroes is threatened by a giant clown, American Maid gets all atwitter when Fledermaus offers his protection. "You would stay just to help me?" she asks.

**THIS REFUSAL TO TAKE TEENAGE SUFFERING SERIOUSLY IS SOMETHING OF A PSYCHIC AND CULTURAL ADVANCE BY THE CHILDREN OF THE BABY BOOMERS.**

"Sure," says Duh Fledermaus. "Besides, what could you do anyway? Hit it with a shoe?"

"Don't start with me!" she cries, once more on her guard. But when the gang returns from yet another



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defeat by the giant clown, American Maid is barefoot, having thrown her shoes at it after all.

Other shows, most of them on the Fox network, are equally sophisticated—among them *Tiny Toon Adventures*, *Eek the Cat*, and even a cartoon *Batman*—and, like the Warner Bros. cartoons of the 1940s, they require a comprehensive knowledge of grown-up popular culture to enjoy them fully. They also help supply that knowledge. Although many of their allusions pass over the heads of younger viewers, they are flattered by being treated as more sophisticated than they are—and will tend to grow into that sophistication by the time they are teenagers.

Now compare this with the much-beloved *Sesame Street*, and what you discover is that what is good about it is precisely what is also good about the commercial cartoons: It is funny and clever and teaches a sort of sophistication that would have been remarkable a generation ago but is the birthright of kids born into the age of electronic media. On *Sesame Street*, one musical number is done as a Whitney Houston-style torch song called "How I Miss My X" and involves movie-style flashbacks to romantic scenes between the singer and a Gumby-like figure in the shape of the letter X.

Contrast the imaginative sophistication it took to write that bit with two separate lessons in the same show on the difference between "up" and "down," and another about the various positions in which people sleep. Is there anyone who could even begin to understand "How I Miss My X" who would not already know what up is, what down is, and how people sleep—not to mention numbers, letters, and maybe a year or two of a foreign language? In any case, what could they learn from all this that they could not learn as well from those Fox cartoons? Parody is the common currency both of *Sesame Street* and of the commercial cartoons, and such training in postmodern irony is undoubtedly the chief educational product of both kinds of program.

It's possible they might remember, later in life, that the Tokyo String Quartet appeared to play a minuet to which Big Bird and Mr. Snuffleupagus, the latter in a powdered wig, did a galumphing dance. But the Tokyo String Quartet is not introduced in a way that differentiates it from other musical acts on *Sesame Street*. No one is there to tell four-year-old kids that they are now being exposed to high culture; that might devalue "How I Miss My X." Indeed, the fact that the minuet is the occasion for a funny sketch places it firmly in the same category as the other music and dancing. Elegance is rendered ridiculous for the sake of the children.

Yet even those conservatives who would abolish PBS without a moment's hesitation still run for cover when the alleged peril to "Big Bird" is brought up against them. In truth, the potency of the "Big Bird" argument, and the reason that the idea of "educational television" continues to have such widespread appeal is simple: parental guilt. The Children's Television Workshop, which produces *Sesame Street*, lives on parental guilt. The CTW is currently engaged in an aggressive marketing campaign called Project PEP (Preschool Education Program) to sell the show to as many day care centers as possible. The company's marketers promote the show as an analgesic for Mom and Dad. "Parents could stop wondering whether their children are watching TV at the child care center," says Alice Cahn, director of children's programming at PBS, "and hopefully focus instead on the truly important questions: What are my kids watching?"

Parents want desperately to believe that the "truly important" question here concerns content, not television itself. They want to be reassured that television itself is not eating away at their children's minds, and they will pay handsomely, either through tax dollars or donations, for such reassurance. The sad truth is that educational programming for children is really directed at their parents. ♦



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# LIVE FREE OR CRY
## *The Truth about New Hampshire*

**By Andrew Ferguson**

*Manchester, New Hampshire*

A few months before the 1964 New Hampshire presidential primary, the political columnist Stewart Alsop took to the pages of the *Saturday Evening Post* to lament that primary's primacy in American presidential politics. New Hampshire, he wrote, is a "small, totally atypical state," consisting "almost entirely of hills covered in second-growth woods." It was almost scandalous that "a couple of thousand woodsy New Hampshirites may well decide what Republican candidate 70,000,000 [citizens] have a chance to vote for."

To measure the evolution of political analysis in the last 30 years, consider Walter Shapiro's recent lament in *USA Today*, a few months before the 1996 New Hampshire primary. "New Hampshire is perhaps the most atypical state in the union," Shapiro wrote, worrying over its lack of racial diversity and cosmopolitan sophistication. "Why have we ceded the lead role in choosing a president to a state where any meal ordered after 9 p.m. is called breakfast?"

What we have here, then, is an old lament about New Hampshire's all-important role in selecting our presidents, a lament that echoes from those second-growth woods every four years at precisely this point in the election cycle. But there are also those who consider the New Hampshire primary a symbol of democratic purity, a throwback to an earlier era before presidential politics was brought low by the flimflam of consultants and media magicians. In the snows of New Hampshire, the happy legend has it, flinty-eyed rustics go *mano a mano* with the men who would be president.

These two opposing views are wrong, and for the same reason. Both accept the myth of New Hampshire exceptionalism—the belief that the New Hampshire primary is somehow unique in late-20th-century American democracy. It's true, of course, that New Hampshire is atypical—smaller and whiter and ideologically more right-wing than the country at large. And it's true that America's method of selecting presidents has grown increasingly trivial and degrading since the first presidential preference primary was held here in 1952.

But Shapiro should cheer up. (So should Alsop, but he's dead.) Because when it comes to American presidential politics, the New Hampshire primary is just as degrading and trivial as everything else.

If there is any truth to the myth of New Hampshire exceptionalism, it lies in the miniature scale of the state and its politics. The primary is like a little toy election, a few levels of complexity above a student council contest in a large suburban high school. Registered voters number fewer than 600,000. The state capitol boasts a single full-time statewide officeholder, and he's the governor.

Those who despair that so small a state carries such disproportionate influence over our political fate should know that things are even worse than they seem: The great mass of New Hampshire's political power is found in a triangle far smaller than the tip of Long Island (except without Al D'Amato). More than 70 percent of the votes are cast in an area that runs from Rochester in the east, to Concord in mid-state, then down to Nashua along the the Massachusetts border. A candidate certain of doing well here can safely forget the rest of the state, especially the mountainous, sparsely settled North Country, which is quickly accessible only by plane. This concentrates campaigning, and this in turn pleases out-of-state reporters, who can attend a half-dozen events with three different candidates in a single day and still get back to the hotel in time for *Friends*.

The politics are more concentrated even than this. By tradition, the various primary headquarters are located within a few blocks of one another in downtown Manchester. Across from the state capitol in Concord the Republican party headquarters is next door to the regional office of Congressman Charles Bass, which is next door to the Democratic party headquarters, which is across the street from the office of Senator Judd Gregg. (Senator Bob Smith's state office is in Manchester, next door to Lamar Alexander's campaign headquarters and one floor down from the studios of WMUR, the only statewide television station.)

Most New Hampshire politicos estimate that the state's parties are animated by 1,500 activists, 2,000



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tops. These are the phone-bank operators, the envelope lickers, the lawn-sign planters—the grunts of the political wars. The candidate newly arrived in New Hampshire will have to activate these activists, and that can be a disorienting experience for a senator or governor. For he will soon discover that unlike most campaigns for national office, few layers of authority separate him from that talky, overeager volunteer who has been enlisted to drive him from event to event. And to enlist this volunteer, our candidate will first have had to enlist a poobah, a warlord, a New Hampshire potentate, of whom, by most estimates, there are fewer than 100, mostly self-appointed.

Wayne Vetter is not self-appointed; he is an authentic poobah. "When you meet Wayne Vetter," a state politician says, "you are meeting one of the most powerful men in this state, politically." To meet Vetter you take State Road 101 east out of Manchester for about 20 miles, then turn onto an unmarked road and drive another few miles through those second-growth woods that so alarmed Stewart Alsop. When you come to a series of barns on your left, you turn right down a long driveway until you see a brick building with slit windows fenced off with concertina wire. This is the county detention facility—what used to be known as a jail—and one of New Hampshire's most powerful politicos is in his office up there on the second floor.

Wayne Vetter is High Sheriff of Rockingham County and former president of the state sheriffs' association. New Hampshire has ten sheriffs, nine of them Republicans. Sheriffs are poobahs *ex officio*. Each must run for reelection every two years and is thus required to keep his "organization"—his personal rolodex of phone bankers and envelope lickers and door-to-door solicitors—well-oiled. Vetter himself is known especially for his ability to mobilize the fellows who brave the cold to plant campaign signs in their neighbors' yards or staple them to telephone poles along highways and town streets. "They call me 'Signs' Vetter," he says, with some modesty. "We had the governor down here last year, and Jesus, he couldn't believe the signs we had. They were *everywhere*."

As he sits in his cinderblock office, in a starched white shirt and handsome glen plaid suit, Sheriff Vetter wears his power lightly. But the color photos propped on the credenza of himself with a smiling President Bush testify that the power is real enough. Only a dolt would think he could be president without running in the New Hampshire primary, and only a dolt would compete in the primary without first beseeching the aid of "Signs" Vetter.

"Lamar? Sure we met. His guy called me and we chatted up in Manchester. This was early in the year. Maybe last year. A very, very nice man. But . . ." His voice trails off. "I don't quite understand what the message is.

"Steve Forbes, we got together over at the Deerfield Fair, not long ago. Just a super guy. I think he might pick up some of the Wilson people, now that Pete's dropped out. Of course, there weren't that many . . .

"Phil Gramm was probably the first to call. This would have been the fall of '94. Called me at home, on a Saturday night. Now, I like Phil. He asked me to get together a few of the guys, some of the other sheriffs. I've been fortunate over the years to get these guys together and kind of lead them, you know. Sheriffs are the number-one vote getters in this state. They'll get more votes than Ronald Reagan in some cases.

"So I arranged this breakfast with Phil and the guys. And he's got all these facts and figures. He says to us, 'I've got 44,000 contributors. I've raised $12 million—more than all the other candidates combined.' That stuck with me. It's impressive. And he says, 'So here's how I'm going to win,' and he lays it all out for us.

"Well, when I get back to the office, I swear the phone rings and it's the guy who runs Dole's campaign calling me. I tell him, 'You're not going to believe where I've just come from.' And I tell him what Gramm's been telling us. He tells me, 'What he didn't tell you was that $6 million of that $12 million he's transferred over from the Gramm Senate campaign.' And of course Gramm didn't tell us that. He misled us. Just like that. It was all money, money, here's how I'm going to win. So I don't know. There's something about Phil . . ."

It was Bob Dole who eventually won Wayne Vetter's heart, and, by extension, the hearts of the other nine Republican sheriffs in New Hampshire.

"I wanted to meet with Dole personally, to settle some issues," says Vetter. "This was before my endorsement. I wanted to give everyone an opportunity. So Dole calls and he asks my wife and I to join he and Elizabeth for dinner. Which we did. Elizabeth is a super gal, by the way."

The issues on Vetter's mind were, first, the Clinton crime bill, which Vetter calls a "fraud," and second, Medicare. "This is an issue important for us," he says, "because of my wife's parents, and my own mother." In their private meeting, which lasted more than an hour, "Signs" outlined his concerns to the majority leader of the United States Senate. The result is really no surprise: "I was glad to see that his thoughts are exactly the same as mine on these issues.

"But what sold me was just sitting down with him



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Michael Ramirez

and seeing that this is one heck of an individual."

Vetter went to work on the other sheriffs, the county prosecutors, and the state representatives who circulate in his orbit. There will be no shortage of lawn signs for Bob Dole come February 20.

Back in Washington, some Beltway-bound campaign consultants don't look kindly on New Hampshire poobahs and what some would consider their imperious ways. The animus is directed less at the sheriffs than at the statewide politicos—a motley of affluent lawyers, former officeholders, current officeholders, and political operatives whose reputations are refurbished every four years.

"It's like the old Kremlin and the Soviet politburo," says one Washington consultant. "All these backroom maneuvers. Andropov wouldn't last a minute with these guys. Their single operating principle is how to keep the franchise going, which is what their reputations depend on. They know one thing, which is New Hampshire politics—knowledge that is absolutely worthless except for one 10-month period every four years."

"They're all big fish in the littlest pond in American politics," says another Washington veteran. "And these consultants, they can't deliver s—. All they can do is talk on the phone to each other."

But they do know, from long experience, how to talk to the press. On the record, they boom their candidate, in 10-second chunks of quotable matter perfectly shaped for a reporter on deadline. Off the record, they trash their colleagues.

One New Hampshire Dole backer said of Alexander's team: "Oh, they're real experts. You know what they're experts at? Talking to the press. But they wouldn't know a voter's list if it bit 'em in the ass."

"Losers," is how one Gramm man described his opposites in the Dole camp. "Did wonders for Kemp in '88, didn't they?"

"A very nice guy," said an Alexander man of a rival. "His only problem is he's insane."

As in academic politics, New Hampshire rivalries are so vicious because the stakes are so low. Power within the state itself is diffuse by design. The state's top political office, the governorship, is one of the weakest in the country. The governor must stand for reelection every two years. Patronage is almost nonexistent. His power is shared with a five-member council, and below that is a yammering assembly of legislators—400 in the state house of representatives, 24 in the state senate.

As a consequence, the few statewide offices worth holding—the governorship, the state's two congressional seats, and its two U.S. Senate seats—rotate in a mortal combat of musical chairs. All are held now by



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Republicans. The former governor, Judd Gregg (son of another former governor), is now a senator. The state's current governor, Steve Merrill, is rumored to want the other Senate seat, now held by Bob Smith. The senior congressman, Bill Zelliff, is said to want Merrill's job. And according to several politicos, everyone would be more than happy to challenge everyone else in the appropriate primary. The picture is complicated by each pol's presidential endorsement. Smith has been weakened by his endorsement of Gramm, who is tanking in the polls, which makes Smith more vulnerable to Zelliff, who is strengthened for having endorsed frontrunner Dole early. And Merrill is weakened for having endorsed Dole late. If you can keep all this straight.

**THE DISPUTE WITH DELAWARE WAS LIKE A RUMBLE BETWEEN THE LULLABY LEAGUE AND THE LOLLIPOP GUILD.**

Of course, there's no reason why you should want to. The interest New Hampshire holds for observers of national politics resembles the power once held by the Soviet Union. Without its nuclear weapons, the USSR was just Albania with elephantiasis. Without its first-in-the-nation primary, New Hampshire is just Vermont with Republicans.

First-in-the-nation: In New Hampshire, this is a single word. For several elections now, the state has shared F-I-T-N status with the Iowa caucuses, held ten days before the New Hampshire primary, but those are *caucuses*. New Hampshire's primary primacy is enshrined in state law, which dictates that it be held "on the Tuesday immediately preceding the date on which any other state shall hold a similar election." Since 1952, when the primary was held in late March, the date has been pushed farther and farther forward as other states try to horn in on New Hampshire's cherished possession. Delaware was the most recent interloper, late in 1995, when it proposed to hold a primary, not before New Hampshire's, but four days afterward. The near-violent dispute between the two tiny, insignificant states was like a rumble between the Lullaby League and the Lollipop Guild. New Hampshire won in the end. Its secretary of state asked all the candidates to sign a pledge not to campaign in Delaware—a bit of Yankee mau-mauing that proved amazingly successful, as every would-be president except Gramm and Forbes agreed.

New Hampshirites are understandably obsessed with their F-I-T-N vulnerability, and the obsession is perfectly reflected in the only two statewide media outlets, the *Manchester Union Leader* and WMUR-TV. From the days of its ferociously right-wing editor William Loeb, who died in 1981, the *Union Leader* has been ascribed heroic powers of persuasion by the reporters who alight here every primary season. In the myth of New Hampshire exceptionalism, the *Union Leader* looms over political life as a behemoth: cranky and biased in its news columns, enormously influential in its editorials. In fact it is neither. Such influence as it has among its 70,000 daily subscribers appears to be almost wholly negative. Its endorsements over the last several elections have included Pete DuPont in 1988, John Ashbrook in 1972, and Pat Buchanan in 1992—a gallery of losers.

Still the presidential candidates make a quadrennial pilgrimage to the home of the paper's publisher, Loeb's widow Nacky, in the bucolic village of Goffstown, outside Manchester. Bob Dole made his oblations last summer, seeking her endorsement. "I think he really thought he had a chance," chuckles Joe McQuaid, the paper's editor. Heh-heh. Mrs. Loeb responded by endorsing Buchanan and now blasts Dole routinely as an ideological squish in her front-page editorials. "The endorsement won't help Buchanan, but the relentless trashing can hurt Dole," says one New Hampshire reporter. "After the *Union Leader* has decided to endorse somebody else, the best you can hope for if you're a candidate is for them to ignore you."

The state's most prominent political reporter is Carl Cameron, who has achieved his stature by virtue of being the only full-time political reporter at WMUR. The candidates know him by sight, seek his advice, phone him at home. I chatted with him in the state capitol, outside the secretary of state's tiny office, while we waited for Richard Lugar to show up and formally file his papers as a presidential candidate.

"New Hampshire reporters have a special expertise," he said. "You go to Raleigh-Durham, reporters there can tell you everything there is to know about the Blue Devils. You come here, reporters can tell you everything about politics. It's our local sport."

Cameron is a self-possessed man with the sleepy air of someone immune to surprise. "With all due respect, it is almost impossible to scoop us on this," he continued. "For example: We've covered Lugar every time he's come up here, and he's been coming up here since '92. If the syndicated columnists and the newsweeklies come up here and all of a sudden discover that Lugar is not getting a response from voters, that's their big story. Well, excuse me, we had that story 18 months ago."

As he spoke Lugar suddenly appeared, among a



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New Hampshire-sized entourage of four people. He shot straight toward Cameron. Lugar is known for his decorousness but for a moment he looked as if he were ginning himself up to give a big hug. Cameron gave him a sleepy stare. So Lugar merely grabbed the reporter's hand and pumped it. "It's the recorder of all deeds!" Lugar said enthusiastically, pumping like crazy. "Good to see you, my friend!"

Cameron nodded and escorted the candidate into the secretary of state's office, where a group of local reporters had gathered around a table for a press conference. Lugar sat down and immediately subjugated himself. "I want to announce," he said, "that I will not be filing as a candidate in Delaware. I want to do what I can to protect the historical integrity of a process that has worked well."

The reporters looked more than satisfied and then uncorked their own questions. Was Dole slipping in the polls? Is he being hurt by the "age issue"? How does the senator account for the nasty rhetoric of this campaign? Can he raise enough funds to continue a plausible campaign? What about organization?

And so on. New Hampshire voters thrive on issues, like no other voters in America—or so the exceptionalists say. And reporters in New Hampshire match their readers in sophistication—or so it is said. It's interesting to note, then, that every question was what professionals call a "process" question, involving matters of strategy and tactics, rather than a "substance" question, referring to the candidate's "stand on the issues."

Then again, it may be that in New Hampshire the reporters had the "substance" story 18 months ago and are bored already.

Give them the benefit of the doubt: Perhaps New Hampshire voters truly are wondering whether Dick Lugar has the fundraising capacity to go the distance. According to the myth, they are no-nonsense individualists, anti-tax libertarians trying to shrug off overweening government, who proudly brandish the state's license-plate motto "Live Free or Die." "These are very sophisticated voters who take this very seriously," says Tom Rath, a Concord lawyer who has worked in several presidential primary campaigns. "The primary is an ongoing civics lesson, and people learn about the issues and get to know the candidates." New Hampshirites love to repeat the gag about the voter who's undecided because he's only met each candidate twice.

This is the "retail politics" of New Hampshire lore, and indeed New Hampshirites do have a chance to see the candidate in the flesh if they're so inclined. Like their fellow voters everywhere, though, they mostly watch TV. "You can work every coffee shop in the state," says one New Hampshire pol, "meet every voter, but if your opponent has a good media buy, he can wipe you out in a week." Steve Forbes, who has scarcely resorted to retail politics, has instead bought hundreds of thousands of dollars in TV ads. From nowhere he has risen to second place in the polls, outdistancing, among others, Lamar Alexander, who made a celebrated walk across the state, retailing all the way.

Nor are New Hampshirites immune to the other infections of modern politics. During the second week of December a cold snap hit the state, and even the primary news in the *Union Leader* and on WMUR was pushed aside by the public outcry.

And for what did the flinty libertarians cry out? Federal aid. "Federal Budget Battle Is Leaving State's Towns and Struggling Elderly, Needy Out in the Cold," griped the *Union Leader*. With budget negotiations in abeyance, the state's usual heating-oil subsidies from the feds had been delayed, and New Hampshirites weren't happy. Local pols, from congressmen to the governor, bragged about the pressure they were applying to Washington so the dollars could flow once again—so the individualists could once again cash their federal checks. The perfect New Hampshire presidential candidate would cut taxes, balance the budget, rail against the intrusions of the federal government, and double the subsidies for home heating oil.

**THE PERFECT CANDIDATE WOULD CUT TAXES, BALANCE THE BUDGET, AND DOUBLE HEATING OIL SUBSIDIES.**

Every state in the union could yield a similar example of voter self-delusion, of course. Which is the point about the New Hampshire myth. It all sounds so familiar: voters who hate government until the checks are due, reporters obsessed with trivialities, consultants and politicos elbowing for position and using campaigns for their own aggrandizement. Is it fair to subject our presidential candidates to the indignities of New Hampshire politics as a pre-condition for winning the White House? This is the question that feature writers wrestle with every four years, from Stewart Alsop to Walter Shapiro, and unless you have some unaccountable sympathy for presidential candidates, the answer is: You bet. New Hampshire may be small; and in some respects "atypical." But no matter what its detractors or admirers say, it *is* American politics, the perfect boot camp for the president of the last best hope of earth. ♦



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# Dear Generation X: A Letter to My Cohort

**By Andrew Peyton Thomas**

Much ink and anguish have already been devoted to chronicling the shortcomings and deprivations of the variously described collection of troubled souls known as Generation X. This Xer's letter may add little to the outpouring of self-analysis other than further evidence of this generation's obsession with the self. But perhaps a few more words on the matter may be added without being unseemly.

It is true that we are the first generation of Americans to have been reared in large numbers in broken homes and to grow up in a culture of random violence and common callousness. That we have contributed to these trends upon reaching young adulthood is as natural as it is tragic. The great challenge confronting our generation is to break this cycle of rampant selfishness and cultural decline. Yet it often seems that our generation's only common bond, aside from an almost eerie ability to recite dialogue from *The Brady Bunch*, is an attraction to extreme individualism. Such a bond, of course, is by its very nature fragile and untrustworthy, and promises to erode further a civilization already flirting with collapse.

In politics, for example, we are often described as "fiscally conservative but socially liberal." Xers want, it is said, "to be left alone." Libertarianism is supposedly replacing the Great Society naivete of the baby boomers with a realism born of government's recent, well-intentioned failures. But we must not deceive ourselves by dressing up this theory with high-minded motives.

Our libertarianism is simply rationalized selfishness. It rejects, for instance, higher taxes and restrictions on sexual liberation not out of any lofty concern for the common good, but because such policies would take more money from our pockets and more hedonistic rights from our persons.

In a recent front-page article on Generation X in *USA Today*, one young person summed up this philosophy with admirable clarity: "The individual is the most basic unit of society." Few ventures into political theory are more radically wrong than this. As can be seen in all viable societies and as many philosophers will attest, the *family* is the basic unit of society. It is there where the individual breathes his first breaths, learns his first thoughts, and gains his most important ideas about citizenship.

To contend that the individual may place self-interest above family responsibilities is the precursor to dissolving households and social havoc. It can be no surprise, therefore, that over the last 30 years, as each succeeding generation has accepted this terrible principle more fervently, America has been convulsed with almost every social pathology imaginable. Violent crime, child abuse and neglect, and reckless egoism among Americans of all races and classes cast an ominous shadow over the land.

Many have blamed the frenetic events of the 1960s for these trends. But in fact that decade's merry, mass overturning of custom and order was only the implementation of theories conceived independently over centuries. First in theory, and then in practice, the self became king. And in very short order, the American community has disintegrated into a fine powder of self-interested individuals lacking sympathy for one another's concerns and fidelity to the common social web that we call law.

Yet the complaints about American society that are heard most often from Generation X are not about our inheritance of a society fragmenting from these vices. They are instead about reduced economic opportunities. That sort of complaint is to be expected, given the self-driven materialism of our time. But the great challenges confronting us as a generation, and by whose measure historians will judge us and our nation, are primarily cultural, not economic.

The American middle class, as measured by the standards to which we are accustomed, is in fact declining, and probably irreversibly. No tax cut, industrial policy, or protectionist trade barrier is likely to change this. The reasons are familiar but bear repeating in this context.

Following World War II and its devastation of the world's major powers, the United States enjoyed an

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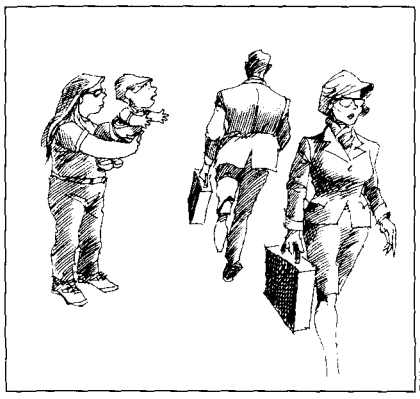
international economic dominance rare in history. As a result, Americans were able to manufacture automobiles, appliances, and other goods at wages that, by historical and global standards, were extraordinary for jobs requiring little or no education. Our parents were thus able to build big homes in beautiful suburbs, drive shiny, gas-guzzling cars, and provide us with a childhood that citizens of any age and any nation would consider privileged.

The inevitable industrialization of the rest of the world has meant competition from lower-paid foreign laborers, falling American wages, and the export of entire industries overseas. Virtually all occupations have felt to some degree the effects of this loss of national wealth. Industriously and creatively we should strive to forestall these economic trends, for the benefit of our families and our country. But for the sake of these same loved ones, we must banish unreasonable expectations about what the future holds.


Bill Garner

Our generation has tried to overlook these economic and social trends, seeking vainly to keep up with the standard of middle-class prosperity set by the fortunate generation before us. Thus, as wages have fallen, our generation has tried to compensate by broadly initiating a culture in which, for instance, young mothers are expected to provide a second paycheck for the household. This is due less to any special allegiance to feminism or careers *per se* than to the materialism all too common in our age.

Many young parents privately sense the harmfulness of institutions, such as day-care facilities, that have arisen in response to these new priorities. We reassure ourselves that children are resilient, that they can be left to raise themselves with few ill effects. But today's children have smiled at our optimism and have pierced these unreasonable hopes one by one with a wave of unprecedented juvenile pathologies.

If we are to avoid contributing further to our country's demise, our generation must accept, first of all, the following: We will probably be the first generation of Americans that will not do as well as our parents economically. This is not an epic injustice. Our parents enjoyed unusual economic circumstances that we cannot reasonably expect to be repeated in our lifetime. It is human nature, more than anything intrinsic to our generation, that leads us to bemoan these economic dislocations, rather than find reason for happiness in the remarkable prosperity of our childhood.

Ours will not be a generation of paupers. But unless we are to systematically deprive our children of both parents during their most important formative years, with harmful results, we must accept the fact that we will likely spend our younger years living more or less as our grandparents did at our age. That is, we will have to work and save longer than we might like before reaching suburbia. More of us will have to live for some time in apartments instead of homes, drive one older car instead of two newer ones, and take few if any vacations worthy of a postcard. The difficulty of adjusting to this economic reality is not to be ignored or dismissed. Still, it must be said that there are far worse troubles plaguing our planet than financial challenges of this sort.

Every generation decides, through the cumulative force of its numbers and deeds, whether its society will survive or perish. This is the question confronting Generation X today, as we move into our most productive adult years at an urgent time in our country's history. As our grandparents conquered the Depression and fascism, and as our parents subdued segregation, so Generation X must stand firm against the great selfishness and disunion of our time. If we choose to strive only to outdo our predecessors in the self-indulgence and pleasure-seeking that have become defining features of late-20th-century America, then we will probably seal our country's doom.

Perhaps, however, we can do something different, something truly remarkable in the history of nations. This must be our resolution. We must turn away from these temptations. Let us reject the vices that swirl around us, enticing us to hasten our national undoing. Let us rediscover and sacrifice for our families. Generations before us saw the family not as an obstacle to self-fulfillment but as their greatest source of satisfaction and purpose; we can aspire to few things higher than the restoration of this belief.

Let us leave the base and selfish pursuits of our era to less enlightened souls. What we lack in material prosperity will be more than offset by the nobility that we will gain in the eyes of all generations and nations that will succeed us. And from this new dedication to a dying and beloved civilization, we may yet prove to all the world that this throwaway generation of slackers and delinquents can rise up at its country's hour of greatest need with a message for the ages: one of self-denial, redemption, and honor. ♦



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# America's Foremost Muckraker

**By Tucker Carlson**

On December 11, a jury in Wenatchee, Washington, acquitted Robert and Connie Roberson of 14 counts of child molestation. Since March, the Robersons had been in custody, charged with raping children on the altar of their church during Sunday services (Roberson is a Pentecostal minister). For those who followed their trial—as well as the trials of some of the 40 other people in Wenatchee who have been arrested on similar charges recently—the outcome came as a relief but not as a surprise. Like many people accused of serious crimes, the Robersons have always claimed they are innocent. Unlike most, they almost certainly are.

Thousands of miles away in New York, in the editorial page offices of the *Wall Street Journal*, a writer named Dorothy Rabinowitz anxiously waited for the verdict in the Roberson case. Since the late 1980s, Rabinowitz has worked to free a number of people she believes were wrongly convicted of molesting children. She has been startlingly successful. For all of the high-minded talk that swirls around journalism, few reporters actually write stories that change people's lives for the better, that right egregious wrongs or make society a more decent place. Rabinowitz has. At least five people imprisoned on child sex charges can trace their eventual release—and vindication—directly to her efforts. And not one of them has gone on to commit other crimes after getting out.

Rabinowitz had campaigned particularly hard for the Robersons, whose tangles with the local police and prosecutors contained so many examples of corruption and coercion that her columns on the subject were titled simply, "Wenatchee: A True Story." She was elated by the acquittal. But there are still 19 people from Wenatchee in prison on molestation charges Rabinowitz considers untrue. And she intends to do her best to get them out.

The chain of events that first drew Rabinowitz's attention to false accusations of sexual abuse began on April 30, 1985, when a four-year-old boy went for a check-up at a pediatrician's office in suburban New Jersey. As a nurse took his temperature with a rectal thermometer, the boy made an offhand remark. "That's what my teacher does to me at nap time at school," he said.

At another time, in another place, the boy's statement might have been dismissed as the idle comment it was. As it happened, his words were taken as evidence by the nurse and his mother—and later by police, prosecutors, and a jury—of sexual abuse at the hands of his teacher, 23-year-old Kelly Michaels.

Within weeks, Michaels, a Catholic-school girl from Pittsburgh with no history of abusing children, had been hauled in and, despite passing a polygraph exam, charged with crimes that horrified even veteran cops. Over the span of seven months, prosecutors claimed, Michaels had molested every child—all 51 of them—enrolled at the Wee Care Day Nursery in Maplewood, New Jersey, where she worked. (The charges ultimately were pared down to those involving just 31 children.)

And not just molested them. According to testimony, coaxed from the children by therapists, Michaels had repeatedly violated them "with knives, forks, a wooden spoon, and Lego blocks"; licked peanut butter and jelly off their genitals; played Jingle Bells on a piano in the school's music room in the nude; and "made them drink her urine and eat a 'cake' of her feces." One child testified that Michaels, apparently in a fit of pique, had turned him into a mouse. Another "told the court that Kelly had forced him to push a sword into her rectum."

All of this had happened, prosecutors alleged, daily, on three different floors of the busy Episcopal church building in which the school was housed. Meanwhile, no adult had noticed any sign of the supposed abuse, nor had any child reported it to his parents—indeed, long after charges against Michaels were filed, many of the kids continued vehemently to deny that they had been abused at all. And, despite the brutal and bloody nature of many of the acts described, not a single piece of physical evidence to corroborate the charges was presented.

There were, in other words, significant weaknesses in the state's case. Strangely, however, nobody but Kelly Michaels and her family seemed to notice. Not the general news media, which, in predictably



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sensationalistic coverage, accepted the prosecution's position uncritically. Not local politicians, who used the case to trumpet their own vigilance and compassion. And certainly not the jury, which in the spring of 1988 found Kelly Michaels guilty on 115 counts of molesting 20 small children. (She was found not guilty, incidentally, of the original charge, taking a child's temperature with a rectal thermometer.) Three months later, Michaels was sentenced to 47 years in prison.

One person who did notice that something seemed amiss was Rabinowitz, a long-time media critic and free-lancer. Her best-known book is *New Lives*, a study of Holocaust survivors. Rabinowitz, who was working for channel 9 in New York City at the time of the trial, told her editor she planned to do an on-air commentary raising the apparent inconsistencies in the case. "Forget it," he said—no defending child molesters on TV.

But Rabinowitz didn't forget it. Though the transcript of the trial had been sealed, she managed to obtain a copy of it and spent the following months steeping herself in information about the prosecution of Kelly Michaels. What she found confirmed her suspicion that Michaels had been railroaded. Co-workers at Wee Care had been bullied into testifying against Michaels; one who held out was charged with failure to report child abuse. Parents had been organized and meticulously coached by zealous therapists employed by the state. The judge had not allowed defense experts to examine the allegedly abused children. There was even foreshadowing of the O.J. Simpson spectacle: "For the jurors who doubted that one woman could commit so many awful crimes," Rabinowitz wrote later of the trial, "Assistant Prosecutor Sara McArdle reminded them in her summation that Adolf Hitler, 'one man,' had persecuted not a 'little school,' but the 'entire world'—'Jews, Gypsies, Czechs and blacks.' Blacks of course were not among Hitler's victims, but many of the jurors were black."

Most damning of all, Rabinowitz discovered that social workers—most of whom came across in transcripts as abysmally trained ideologues—had all but forced the children to make claims of abuse against Kelly Michaels. Therapists used anatomically correct dolls to "suggest" ways that children might have been molested. In one exchange Rabinowitz uncovered, a social worker and college psychology major named Lou Fonolleras tells a child, "If you don't help me, I'm going to tell your friends that you not only don't want to help *me* but you won't help *them*." Many of the children, it turned out, continued to refuse to "help" Fonolleras and his colleagues. Which, according to the therapists, was itself a sure indictment of Kelly Michaels: Molested children are often in denial.

Chas Fagan

**Dorothy Rabinowitz**

Disturbing as the obvious malfeasance in the Michaels case was, Rabinowitz soon learned that similar cases were being prosecuted all over the country. Beginning in the mid-1980s, hundreds of people—teachers, ministers, day-care workers, and others who worked with children—were sent to prison on the basis of testimony every bit as fantastic as that presented at the Michaels trial. In Memphis, a preschool teacher was convicted of molestation after it was alleged she had blown up a hamster in front of her class with a bomb. Kids in Chicago testified they were made to eat a boiled baby. Other children told of being raped by maniacal clowns, or made to sacrifice animals in satanic rituals in graveyards. In the longest criminal trial in American history, a California preschool teacher named Virginia McMartin (who died last week at the age of 88) was accused along with her grandson of molesting more than 1,000 children. According to young witnesses, she used a honeycomb of secret (and, it was later determined, non-existent) tunnels under her office to accomplish the deed.

Far from being dismissed as ridiculous, cases like these were either turned into ominous headlines by newspaper writers or cited by liberal columnists as the inevitable product of a male-dominated society. *New York Times* columnist Anna Quindlen defended the accusers of Kelly Michaels



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in a column entitled "Believing the Children." Gloria Steinem urged authorities to find the tunnels under Virginia McMartin's preschool as soon as possible.

Virtually alone among members of the press, Rabinowitz recognized the dramatic rise in sex abuse cases for what it was—a dangerous outbreak of mass hysteria, nurtured and abetted by a burgeoning class of therapists, shrinks, and crank spiritualists with an ideological (and financial) stake in portraying children as sexual victims. Rabinowitz began organizing the evidence she had gathered into a magazine article. Her 12-page, rigorously reported case study of the Kelly Michaels affair, "From The Mouths Of Babes To A Jail Cell: Child Abuse and the Abuse of Justice," appeared in the May 1990 issue of *Harper's* and immediately provoked outrage among readers, drawing more letters than any article the magazine had published in memory.

Among those who read the piece was Morton Stavis, a long-time leftist lawyer from New York. Stavis called Rabinowitz and offered to take the case pro bono. Since his colleagues at the Center for Constitutional Rights (which he had helped to found) refused to have anything to do with the case, Stavis worked out of his house, his expenses paid by, as Rabinowitz puts it, "three Jewish businessmen who read *Harper's*" and were moved to contribute. "My wife got sick reading that," one of the men told Rabinowitz. "I want to give you money."

Three years later, just as an appeals court was about to hear Michaels's case, Stavis was killed in an accident; an old friend of Stavis's, William Kunstler, and another lawyer, Robert Rosenthal, took his place. In March 1993, the court overturned Kelly Michaels's conviction. Some months later, the district attorney's office declined to retry the case. After five years, Kelly Michaels left prison.

Rabinowitz, who by this time had become an editorial writer and television critic at the *Wall Street Journal*, had little opportunity to savor the victory before being thrust once again into a strikingly similar sex-abuse case. Like Kelly Michaels, Violet Amirault had been accused, along with her son and daughter, of assaulting children at a nursery school they ran in Malden, Massachusetts. If anything, however, the charges against the Amiraults were even less believable than those leveled against Michaels. They included raping children with sticks and knives, mutilating animals, coprophagy, trips with a sinister clown to a "magic room," and chilling visits from R2D2, the squat robot from *Star Wars*. Again, children not readily forthcoming with spicy details were deemed by social workers "not ready to disclose."

Rabinowitz immediately took up the Amiraults' cause in the pages of the *Journal*. Many journalists in Boston were skeptical of her efforts. Some were hostile. "Journal Writer Defends Malden Child Abusers," said one headline in the *Boston Herald*. The city's local alternative paper implied that Rabinowitz was in league with the North American Man-Boy Love Association. Rabinowitz ignored it and went on to write three columns on the Amiraults under the title "Darkness In Massachusetts." Each was a combination of moving prose and exhaustive reporting. The columns showed, among other things, how the obviously innocent Amiraults had been done in by an unscrupulous district attorney with political ambitions. (That prosecutor, Scott Harshbarger, is now the attorney general of the state of Massachusetts.) The first installment, which ran in January 1995, ended with these words: "As was true of the witch trials of an earlier Massachusetts, this prosecution will, in time, be the source of amazement and horror. In the meantime Violet Amirault lies locked in prison along with her son and daughter, while the days and years of life slip past."

Within weeks, irate readers had sent in more than $70,000 in contributions to a tax-exempt defense fund Rabinowitz had set up for the Amiraults. Lawyers called to offer their services gratis. Rabinowitz, backed by the newspaper, kept the pressure on, churning out signed and unsigned editorials on the plight of the Amiraults. By August, the Amirault women were free, their convictions overturned. (The third Amirault, Gerald, remains in prison, his first appeal denied.)

Though the rash of mass sex-abuse cases seems to have abated some in the last several years (thanks in no small part to what Rabinowitz has done), the question remains: How did one middle-aged media writer, with no formal training as a reporter, recognize the single greatest outbreak of American McCarthyism since McCarthy himself—and why did just about everybody else in the press miss it?

Simple, she says: "The absolute gullibility of journalists. They accepted every word the prosecutors told them. And they believed in experts." Rabinowitz didn't.

In other words, a lone journalist refused to be snowed by ruthless prosecutors, asked tough questions, raked muck, stood up to the Establishment, and in the end rescued unjustly imprisoned people from the clutches of a corrupt justice system.

Sound familiar? But here's the 90s twist: That lone journalist is on the right. ♦



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Books

# TWISTED OLIVER STONE

**By Diana West**

I was paranoid from that moment on," Oliver Stone tells biographer James Riordan. This should be good: What experience could possibly have prompted the onset of so fertile a paranoia?

Where in Riordan's new book, *Stone: the controversies, excesses, and exploits of a radical filmmaker* (Hyperion, $24.95, 573 pages), does the answer lie? Could it be when Stone landed in the clink for marijuana smuggling on his 1968 return from Vietnam? ("He was a vet just returned from combat . . . who'd been thrown in jail and America didn't seem to care.") Or perhaps paranoia dates from 1975 and Stone's unproduced but attention-getting script *The Cover-Up*, the first of his fictional works "to involve a government agency in a conspiracy" (it connected the dots between Uncle Sam and the Patty Hearst kidnapping)? Or maybe the pivotal event was as recent as 1990, when *Born on the Fourth of July* failed to bag a slew of Academy Awards in the aftermath of the first collision of Stone-made falsehood with verifiable fact? ("They'll find something to make you look bad if they want to," says Stone.) Reaching deep into the past, one ought not dismiss the miserable stretch in summer camp that Oliver Stone endured at age 4. Or does the answer lie elsewhere?

Indeed it does. The dark epiphany, as Stone explained to his biographer, came with the first debunking of his movie *JFK*, a public service performed in 1991 by the *Washington Post*'s George Lardner while the film was still in production. Lardner got his hands on an early draft of the script and tried to correct Stone's twisted account of events. Quoth self-described anarchist Stone: "I said, where the f— is our security? . . . I wanted our computers sealed. I wanted security guards. . . . We didn't know where an attack might come from or what might be targeted as an obstruction. Now that the real guts of what the film was about was out, who knew what to expect? Especially if the CIA or the Mafia wanted it stopped."

There's more. Having brazenly fingered the CIA, the military, Lyndon Johnson, and Earl Warren, among others, in a plot to kill the 35th president of the United States, Stone adopted a pose of injured innocence: "I never sought controversy. I tried to make *JFK* as quietly as possible . . . "

What to make of a man who seems genuinely to believe he may be rubbed out, offed, or taken for a ride in cement shoes because of "the real guts" of his movie, all the while insisting he "never sought controversy"? Again and again, Stone demonstrates an inability to distinguish not only between right and wrong, but even between yes and no. This explains how he could, by his own telling, rediscover in himself an "essential decency" that allowed him to give up cocaine—and, simultaneously, write *Scarface*, a 1983 flick still notorious for its obscene violence and mind-blunting profanity.

Now, just as *Nixon* opens a new chapter in Oliver Stone's cinematic history of the American-speaking peoples, James Riordan has offered up a curious work of warts-and-all hagiography, which felt-wraps the "excesses and exploits" of the subtitle in a cloak of acceptance and apology. Riordan does not shrink from such clichés as "anger" and "alienation," "pain" and "compassion," to pad his subject's sharp edges. Most of the time, though, Stone's antisocial habits just blend into the Hollywood landscape.

Thus, when Stone slips a Quaalude into a date's drink, writer-director John Milius and his wife can't stop laughing. (Years earlier, Stone had spiked his father's drink with LSD.) While the movie community buzzes about Stone's auditions for the female parts in *The Doors*, casting director Risa Bramon Garcia puts them in perspective: "Look, I was in the room. All that happened was the girl had to say, 'My c— is yours,' and kind of bend over. I mean, big deal." From collaborator Richard Rutowski (*Natural Born Killers*) we hear of a late-70s "research" project that led him and Stone through several prisons, into all of which they smuggled cocaine, on one occasion getting high in an electric chair. In such company, even Oliver Stone verges on the unexceptional.

As for the "controversies" mentioned in Riordan's subtitle—mainly the struggles over historical memory that separate Stone from such run-of-the-movie-mill lefties as Robert Redford and Warren Beatty—the arguments only make it into the book garbled and incomplete. Riordan concludes, deadpan: Stone "may even slightly distort the factual truth sometimes for the good of this goal [spiritual truth]. Because of these attitudes, he has never understood why people get offended when he tells what he believes is the truth. To him there's no such thing as an offensive truth. He doesn't factor in that people

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may get angry because the truth hurts feelings."

Needless to say, the willful, reckless distortion of fact is not a matter of feelings, hurt or otherwise. Expect no insightful, let alone literate, critique of Stone from *Stone*. As biography, the book is plodding and superficial; if it has high points, it does so because interviews with Oliver Stone—and, indeed, his life itself—contain crests of frenzy and disequilibrium that do not fail to astonish and unnerve.

Oliver "I never sought controversy" Stone was born in 1946, Year One of the Baby Boom, or, as he prefers, the dawn of the Cold War. His upbringing, for all its wealth, was emotionally grim. Son of a French Catholic mother and a Manhattan Jewish father, Stone grew up an Episcopalian. He followed a privileged track from prep school to boarding school to Yale, his father's alma mater. (Upon matriculation in 1927, Lou Silverstein had changed the family name to Stone.)

Oliver's parents were preoccupied and promiscuous; Riordan recounts wifeswapping, prostitutes for Lou, and, later, sex-and-drug parties for Jacqueline. They divorced when Oliver was 15, leaving their only child to hear the news from his headmaster. Not long after, Lou Stone bought his son his first sexual experience with a call girl, and, soon after that, President Kennedy was assassinated. This series of events constitutes young Oliver's coming of age. "It left me feeling that there was a mask on everything, a hidden negative truth. . . . I feel you have to keep digging into history to understand what happened to us and our generation," he says. Perhaps here lies a clue as to why Oliver Stone movies are peopled by such cold and unlikeable characters, and why many of the films project a pre-divorce, pre-assassination world that glows with a near-surreal sheen.

The well-known 14-month hitch in Vietnam followed, and Stone, sometimes valorous and almost continuously drugged-out, lived to tell his tale. Seventeen years later, after 14 screenplays, a failed first marriage, one Academy Award (*Midnight Express*), and untold quantities of drugs, Oliver Stone brought *Platoon* to the screen, transforming himself into a hero of the intelligentsia and a formidable force in Hollywood.

The bulk of Riordan's book consists of chapters named for Stone's major movies, and the making of each is meticulously documented: *Midnight Express*, *Scarface*, *Salvador*, *Platoon*, *Wall Street*, *Talk Radio*, *Born on the Fourth of July*, *The Doors*, *JFK*, *Heaven and Earth*, and *Natural Born Killers*. Considered as a whole, Stone's work is not memorable for storytelling. It runs to linear plots and stock characters, loaded with emotional baggage calculated to elicit a predictable response. Like a TV movie-of-the-week writer who spins stories around terminal illness, Stone tends to revolve his pictures around a charged central element—the brutality of warfare or drug trafficking, the pathos of paralysis, the nihilistic destructiveness of serial killers—that is fused to go off, almost regardless of the story line.

Stone's significance hangs instead on his handful of movie-histories. Without *Platoon*, *Born on the Fourth of July*, to a minor extent *The Doors* and *Heaven and Earth*, and, of course, *JFK* and now *Nixon*, Oliver Stone would be just another successful, reflexively leftist moviemaker living a high-consumption fairy tale in the West Coast sunshine. The creator of *Conan the Barbarian*, *Wall Street*, *Talk Radio*, and the reprehensible *Natural Born Killers* would not rate a book-length study.

Stone's short list begins with *Platoon*, the Vietnam war movie that told America "the enemy was in us." According to Riordan, "the film was neither "pro- nor antiwar in most people's minds. It was simply the truth." (*Salvador*, released the same year, is a more conventional work of advocacy; it does not pretend to enshrine Simple Truth.)

While deeply autobiographical, *Platoon* is best classified as a fictional memoir. Critics accorded it the gravity of historical record, reveling in a depiction of the ugly American vet that seemed to validate the era's war protests and draft evasions. And where the truth posed a personal threat to Stone—as when the depiction of war crimes in the movie raised the question of personal culpability—he could always retreat into the sanctuary of fiction.

Not so with *Born on the Fourth of July*, based on the memoir of Ron Kovic, a gung-ho Marine turned antiwar demonstrator. Riordan uncritically perpetuates the falsehoods of the movie and trivializes the point-by-point refutations of *Born* that dogged it in the months prior to the Academy Awards.

Even Riordan, however, has doubts about Stone's depiction of Kovic's pilgrimage to Venus, Georgia, supposedly to visit the family of a fellow soldier Kovic had accidentally killed. This critical sequence, after which Kovic emerges a war protester, never took place in real life. According to Kovic's officer, it is unlikely the killing occurred. There is no Venus, Georgia, and Kovic contacted no family.

Here is Stone's rationale for what his film shows: "Ron did confess to killing his own man in his book. I felt I could show him writing the book, but I'd rather show him going to Georgia and finding those people because he thought



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about it repeatedly. He had dreams about it and even located where they were. *I thought Ron had in a sense acted this out by writing about it,* which is a significant confession, so I took the liberty of actually having him go down there in the film. In the movie it becomes a key scene because . . . it allows him to . . . deal with the reality of what he did. That frees him up to become a public persona who is ready to go out into the world and become a spokesman. You can't go public like that until you conquer it within your private self" (italics added).

Stone's explanation, for what it's worth, represents a significant shift from his original defense of the movie (not mentioned by Riordan): "I'm the biographer," he told the *Los Angeles Times*. "I'm obviously telling Ron's story. I'm not screwing with the facts."

*The Doors*, the story of rock star Jim Morrison, followed *Born*. It was a flopola, both in the press and at the bank. Still, it allowed Stone to chronicle the flip side of the Vietnam experience and to sample aspects of the sixties he had missed. As Riordan points out, Stone is what cinematographer Bob Richardson calls a "Method director," one who internalizes his protagonists' lives. To re-create the life of Jim Morrison, Stone turned to drugs (peyote), sex (much), and rock'n'roll (The Doors). (During the rush of publicity for *Nixon*, watch for Stone's square coat-and-tie style.) "Maybe I did fail with *The Doors*," Stone told Riordan, whose previous books include a work on Jim Morrison. "But if I did, it's just between Jim and me. I know I tried my best to do something that could live up to him. And I think he would've loved it. But, ultimately, it's just between him and me."

Four years have passed since *JFK* came under attack from both right and left for portraying the Kennedy assassination through the eyes of the widely discredited Jim Garrison as a secret coup d'état carried out to satisfy the greed of the military-industrial complex. It is here that Riordan fails most shamefully in his duties as biographer by not including one meaningful, accurate critique of the movie.

Typical of the scanty context

Kent Lemon

Riordan offers is this: "To be sure, Garrison . . . had his flaws as an investigator, but the more substantiated criticisms impugned his eccentricity rather than his motives. 'Jim Garrison made many mistakes,' Stone concedes. 'He trusted a lot of weirdos and followed a lot of fake leads. But he went out on a limb, way out, even when he knew he was facing long odds.'" The flaws, the fake leads, remain amorphous. Riordan dutifully lists the titles of critical pieces, but he rarely provides more information than where the articles appeared and how many pages they ran.

Stone, at his most disingenuous, points to markers within the movie that supposedly flag its flights of fancy: "We clearly differentiate between fact and theory in the film. Any person familiar with film technique knows that when we cut to something like [Jack] Ruby picking up a bullet in the hospital in black and white, it's a hypothetical image. Or when Garrison's talking about the bullet being placed on the stretcher and we cut to a hand putting a bullet on the stretcher—people realize that is conjecture. . . . It's the same with the dialogue. The differences between Garrison's conjecture and what was established or proven in his mind is clear, and I stand behind those points."

Oliver Stone once told *60 Minutes* he was "trying to understand the world through movies, trying to shape the world through movies, reshape it." Truer words he never spoke. Much has been written about the power of celluloid to suggest and inspire, and, in Oliver Stone's technically adept hands, to reconfigure a span of history. As witnesses to onscreen events, movie audiences—particularly young, post-literate audiences—retain Stone's vision of the past in such a way that it begins to take on the guise of memory and the power of myth.

By now, it is obvious the man is long embarked on a mission to re-create the seminal events of the age in order to undermine a country he inexplicably loathes, even as it enriches and lionizes him. Having assumed the role of national historian, Oliver Stone, is trying to define our sense of ourselves as a people, and he's doing it with help from corporate America, the Disneys and the Warner Brothers who stand behind him. ♦



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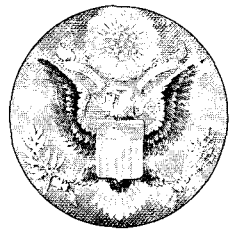
"This country is in many ways a secret to its own citizens. We don't know how the Federal Reserve really works ... I'd love to make a movie about the Federal Reserve Board."
—Oliver Stone, quoted in the *New York Times*, Dec. 17, 1995

# Parody

TOP SECRET



MemCon
DESTROY AFTER READING

**FROM: Alan Greenspan** AG
**TO: The Federal Reserve Board (except Alan Blinder)**

We have learned through top secret sources that film director Oliver Stone is considering making a movie about the Federal Reserve System. As flattering as it may be to us personally (Andrea has told me that Denzel Washington is being recruited to play me), we must enlist our agents to destroy this project.

Stone is highly regarded on Wall Street, especially in GC Cell 24 (Goldman, Solly, Lazard, etc). If he were to discover, in the course of his exhaustive research, the role the Federal Reserve system played in the Kennedy assassination (and Stone's parents' own divorce), it would be catastrophic for central bank independence and our mission to widen inequalities between rich and poor. That was, of course, the goal we established for ourselves at our meeting last year at Ayn Rand's yahrzeit.

I am dispatching special agents Samuel Francis and Spike Lee, whose public poses have done so much to discredit opposition to the Global Conspiracy, to destabilize Stone's operation. They will report directly to Brother Eisner, Director of West Coast Operations. If necessary, we will focus the brunt of the next recession, due to begin March 24, 1996 (three weeks after my reappointment), on the people likely to finance Stone's movie. You will be happy to know that I have already arranged for the repossession of William Greider's house.

In the meantime we must maintain the facade that the Fed is a "boring" institution, dedicated to questions about the money supply and interest rates. As usual, you will be receiving coded messages via "Geraldo Live."

SI-TK MEMCON 3

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